

S E R M O N S

O N

INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE REVEREND

MR ALLAN BUCHANAN,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, INVERKEITHING.

When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. PSAL. xciv. 18, 19.

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M.DCC.XCI.

TO THE READER.

MR ALLAN BUCHANAN, when only twenty-two years of age, was ordained Minister of Inverkeithing, in the year 1744. He died on the 8th of March 1749.

THE admirers of fine language, and of many modern publications, improperly called *Sermons*, will, perhaps, find no entertainment in the following Discourses.

Mr BUCHANAN delivered his Sermons in a masterly and animated manner. He addressed himself to the understandings, as well as to the consciences and affections of his hearers.

By his frequent preaching, and excessive labours in visiting his people, in about four years he wore out a constitution naturally delicate.

FROM many passages in the following Discourses, it is evident they were never intended for public perusal. Several judicious per-

sons, however, who have seen the manuscripts, thought, that, imperfect and unfinished as they are, they may be useful for the instruction and comfort of the serious Christian; especially those who are in spiritual distress—most of the cases incident to a Christian life being stated, and the means of relief discovered.

IN perusing these Sermons, the devout Reader cannot but discern the outgoings of a sanctified heart—the breathings of a soul already touched with a live-coal from the great New-Testament Altar; and an ardent desire in the Author to spend and be spent in the work of his glorious Master—to disseminate the important truths of the gospel, that the Lord Christ may appear to be *all in all* in the salvation of sinners.

To enlarge in recommendation of the subsequent work would be fruitless. An attentive perusal will not fail to attract the attention, warm the affections, and elevate the desires of the renewed soul.

WHEN it is considered that these Discourses are posthumous; that the Author never intended their publication—being no more than his enlarged

enlarged notes; and that the Editor chose strictly to adhere to the manuscript, the pious reader will be disposed to pass over any trifling inaccuracies that may occur.—It is not uncommon for the sceptic and mere moralist to point their arrows against performances of this nature; but attacks from such will neither detract from the Author's merit, nor impede the Christian's edification.

UPON the whole: It is hoped, that Providence, in preserving the manuscripts for upwards of forty years past, has yet some good to do by the labours of this faithful servant of Christ—*He, being dead, yet speaketh.* And that all serious persons may have it in their power to be possessed of this repository of Christian exercise and experience, the book may be had at a price much below what those of its size, quality of paper, &c. are commonly sold for.

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SERMONS

S E R M O N S

O N

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

S E R M O N I.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

And, when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

YOU are met, my brethren, in obedience to the call of Providence, seconded by the voice of God's servants, to humble yourselves before the Lord. God knows with what temper of heart! Solemn appearances covering stout hearts will have a dismal effect.—But I hope better things of many: *Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.* Come, then, affected with a sense of your own heart-plagues first; with the sins of the place—mourning for the glory departed, the judgments now impending; and for the glory of Christ's kingdom.—I am now to call back your meditations to a solemn transaction of our Lord's life, full of instruction; fraught with terror to finners resolutely impenitent; with comfort to saints—giving a glorious view of Christ; and suitable to the end of our meeting. Former verses represent him, in lowly triumph, coming to Jerusalem,—rays of

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kingly glory shone through the veil cast about him. This was abundantly consistent with his humility; he was now going to death, and would do it in triumph, as it was indeed to be a victory. Full of love to sinners—intent on his compassionate designs, he took a view of the city, had it fair before his eyes, he foresaw these stately structures laid in ashes: But this was not the worst—he beheld a devoted people, rejecters of God, on the point of being given up by him, and the spirit of slumber already prevailing. His prophetic and heart-searching eye affected his heart. Tears! strange tears fell from his eyes! For what? for himself? Nay,—for hardened wretches about to imbrue their hands in his blood!—Compassion truly divine! attended with a passionate expression; perhaps an Oh! is here understood, or the sentence is abrupt at the end. In any view, it is the noblest expression of pity that ever was, and founded on the best reason.—To direct your meditations, and teach you to improve this subject, I propose, through Divine assistance,—I. To lay before you the several parts of it, in some Doctrinal Propositions; which we shall illustrate and apply as we go along—II. To make a practical Improvement of the whole.

FIRST, then, I am to lay before you the several parts of the subject, in some Doctrinal Propositions. It obviously contains these:

1st, That the gospel makes a discovery of things belonging to our present and eternal welfare, which it highly concerns us to have a practical acquaintance with, and an experimental application of to ourselves.

2^{dly}, That there is a special time, a precious season of grace allowed us by God, wherein we have peculiar advantages,

advantages, for knowing and improving the things that belong to our peace; and which it concerns us not to let slip.

3dly, That this important season has its period, both with respect to a people and particular persons; so that, through the righteous judgment of God, the things that belong to their peace may be for ever hid from their eyes.

4thly, That contempt of, or indifference about the offers of heaven, or the gospel of Christ, is a sad preface of destruction to a people, or particular persons.

5thly, That the condition of poor dying sinners, who are shutting their eyes on the things that belong to their peace, and are about to be given up by God, is truly melancholy and pitiable in itself—is viewed as such by the Lord Christ, and should be so by us also.

We observed, in the *first* place,

That the gospel makes a discovery of things belonging to our present and eternal welfare, which it highly concerns us to have a practical acquaintance with, and experimental application of to ourselves. These had been revealed to this people, and rejected: Christ told them he was the way—their ceremonies pointed at him; their prophets foretold him; and God was in Christ externally revealed to them.—To us this discovery is made with peculiar advantage; particularly, 1st, *Christ is revealed as the Peace-maker; clothed with this character, and owned of God in it.* His expiating blood removing guilt, satisfying justice; his righteousness a robe fit for the sinner to appear in. He is revealed also as a Peace-maker, by his Spirit removing the enmity of our hearts; one able to get over obstacles, otherwise insurmountable. Here also, his person, God-man, is revealed as an emblem of, and qualifying

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him for this office. 2dly, *The Covenant of Peace, made with and through Christ, is discovered and proposed in the gospel*, as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance; a full provision of the blessings of Peace is made in it, wherein God proposes all freely through Christ, knowing that we can do nothing, and giving security to the believing soul not to be disputed. 3dly, *The Gospel adds to these discoveries God's call to believe*. To approve of the Gospel way, to give a personal consent to it, to receive and rest on Christ as revealed in it,—these are, as it were, the contents of the gospel, directing to the way of peace; these God has revealed to you, my brethren. Ye that know them aright will act accordingly—to know aright, is to chuse and approve of them; to give the heart's *Amen* to the whole; to enter into the Covenant of Peace, rely on it, and solemnly to agree to the treaty proposed. This concerns thee, O sinner!—thy salvation turns on this hinge; woe to thee if found with the weapons of rebellion in thy hand—thy heart disapproving of God's method of salvation, or distrusting the promise. But we proceed to observe, in the

SECOND place, *That there is a special time, a precious season of Grace allowed us by God, wherein we have peculiar advantages for knowing and improving the things that belong to our peace, and that it concerns us much not to let slip*. Our Lord speaks of a day (their day) given to this people. Had this been improved, he had rejoiced over them; but it was now drawn near to its period. Yea, the decree was pronounced with respect to many of them.—You, my brethren, have, many of you, had YOUR DAY; the means of grace, and offers of Christ in the gospel—his voice saying, Behold me, behold me! each returning Sabbath

Sabbath hath renewed God's call. Mean-time, perhaps the Spirit has strove; God melted thee, in some measure; alarmed thee to look about for a moment; told thee, Now, or never; and half persuaded thee, if I may say so. Perhaps most of the hearers of the gospel may, some time or other, find more or less of this; then a favourable gale! Perhaps the blow has been repeated, and Satan obliged to retire a little; then is THE DAY!—the light is clear from the word, the trumpet giving a certain sound, the spirit of deep sleep not taken place in so high a degree, and the gospel retains some favour. Now, this is the day when God knocks at the door of the heart; and this is of much importance: For, in the

THIRD Place, I observe, *That this important season has its period, both with respect to a people and particular persons; so that, through the righteous judgment of God, the things that belong to their peace may be forever hid from their eyes.* This is a consideration that needs rather to be pressed home than proved. God has threatened, and actually removed his candlestick from many places once blessed with it. Total darkness, and a famine of the word of the Lord succeeded. God sometimes withdraws from the ordinances, makes the hearts of a people fat, and punishes their contempt of the gospel this way—Oh, how sad a plague is this! How terrible should the presages of it be!—coldness and indifference; heats and divisions, and these bold and public. But, with respect to particular persons, there is a period to it also; the time we cannot pretend to fix in every case; God is sovereign in this—some have a greater condemnation, because enjoying a longer and a brighter day. I do not say that any sinner is beyond the reach of God's mercy in this life; but

but sure, God's time of striving comes often to an end sooner than life. Either, then, Gods puts an end to the person's life, and cuts him down; or withdraws the powerful preaching of the gospel, blasting perhaps with a dead ministry; or gives the last knock, never more to return: He ceases also to melt any more, by afflictions, &c. Remember the span is measured out—THESE THREE YEARS God notices. Think man! Wast thou alarmed? Perhaps God gave this as one of his signals—O! art thou thinking of it? Instances have been known, where remarkable awakening was followed by remarkable apostasy. May not many of us say, the summer is far spent, and we are not bettered! And what provokes God to depart, and leave off speaking?—stifling his calls and motions, &c. A thick veil may be spread over his word; so that a land of vision may be turned into the shadow of death as to THEE. This leads to observe, in the

FOURTH place, *That contempt of, or indifference about the offers of heaven, or the gospel of Christ, is a sad preface of destruction to a people, or particular persons.* These here spoke of did not KNOW, &c. See what follows. God's peculiar people were a lively emblem of this—in the wilderness, and afterwards. With respect to Societies, this, in point of justice, must take place; and the more privileged, the greater reason to expect it: *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish, &c.* If the Lord designs mercy at last, he commonly melts them in the furnace: Even the Assyrian he makes the rod of his anger. Room should always be left, in our judgments, for sovereign mercy; but this is his ordinary way.—The same is to be said of particular persons. Final impenitence has certain ruin attending it;
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this is the very disease that breeds the never-dying worm: The chief ground of the sentence is, because they have not believed—How shall they escape! How answer a Judge whom, as a Saviour, they contemn'd? How fly to mercy they have slighted, when the door is shut?—If judgment begin at the house of God, &c. If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the sinner appear? Where but with wicked spirits, whom they have chosen as their guides! Let me deal with your consciences on this: I would ask every one, how far this is applicable to you? Do not shift the question, my brethren. Satan may suggest a shuffling answer now, but every mouth will be stopt hereafter. I proceed now to observe, in the

FIFTH and *last* place, *That the condition of poor dying sinners, who are shutting their eyes on the things that belong to their peace, and are about to be given up of God, is truly melancholy and pitiable in itself—is viewed as such by the Lord Christ, and should be so by us also*—He beheld and wept! A soul lost!—a being, raised above all that we know in the creation below, lost irretrievably!—hope extinguished at the very bottom of the heart! Lost, after hearing of grace and salvation! Fallen angels have not this to aggravate their misery: Damned sinners cannot retort this on them, You slighted offers of mercy. Lost, when others are saved! They sat under the same means—this and that man were born around them. These witness against them; and this is their case finally—the sun just going down on them! Matters are ready to come to this fatal crisis; the call, perhaps, is given, or about to be given, that seals salvation or damnation! Am I speaking of a chimerical case? Is it not a just representation of many a hearer of the gospel? SINNER, thy case is
seen

seen and pitied by others, when not by thee! Christ here saw the case of the Jews, and wept over them,—Must it not have been sad? Did such tears fall for trifles? at this time especially. Yea, afterwards he said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but yourselves. Was it because yonder I am to be buffeted, scourged, and crucified? No—*Thou hast not known, &c.* These tears speak indeed. I do not mean that our exalted Redeemer can feel the disturbing power of passion. But they, at least, denote, *1st*, That he had a view of the case, such as would draw tears from us, could we comprehend it,—he sees the soul sinking; the grieved Spirit ready to depart; darkness and death ensuing; the avenues to the heart block'd up; evil spirits triumphing; and the poor man chearful and gay, as the ox that is led to the slaughter! *2^{dly}*, That he knew the value of the soul,—he gave his own life a ransom for his people's, and knows what a loser the man will be. *3^{dly}*, That he knew well what a heaven was lost, and what misery incurred; he only is capable of forming a full judgment of these—he purchased heaven for his people; knew well what bargain he made; he engaged, as man, with the awful justice of God, in suffering, and his soul was amaz'd with the view of it; and, as God, he knew the whole intuitively. *4^{thly}*, These tears speak the language more directly uttered by himself in words: *How often would I have gathered, &c. and ye would not.* I was in earnest, as if he had said—let these tears bears witness. Yea still I would, were ye willing! Thus speak the tears of Christ. Sinner, Dost thou hear? Art thou unmoved thyself? Believe it these are truths. But I proceed to the

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SECOND thing proposed; namely, To make some *General Improvement* of this subject. 1st, then, Let us see how sad and dangerous is the state of those sinners, whose hearts were never affected with a view of their misery; ever gay and unconcerned—strangers to sorrowing after a godly sort—hardy enough, perhaps, to make a mock at sin—return reproofs for it, delivered even from the word, with scorn and contempt. These surely are strangers to their own case, and sleep as on the top of a mast. Is it enough to reconcile you to sin, that it is fashionable? Or will a small temptation atone for it in your eyes? You do not know it indeed. Oh! think how Jesus' blessed eyes, that shed not tears for himself, did it for these in your sad situation. Think—there must be something more than you imagine here.

2^{dly}, Let us inquire whether there appear any dangerous symptoms about ourselves of the Lord's being ready to give the last knock to some of our hearts, as private persons; or to punish us as a people in general. The case deserves inquiry; and is suitable to what we now profess. Is the Lord raising convictions, and we getting the better of them? Are we falling into a way of putting them by ourselves? Are we turned expert in the fatal art of saying, *Go away for this time*? Are we hunted, as it were, from one refuge of lies unto another, and know not where to rest?—then it would seem that a crisis at least draws near.—With respect to us, as a people, let me put you in mind, That God seems to be shaking a rod over our heads. Look among ourselves, and see if *Vice* be not triumphant!—holding up its head; uncleanness, without a blush!—drunkenness and rioting, barefaced! Or, if it wears a sober name, yet no less offensive—envy and animosity,

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fity, unlike the temper of the meek and lowly Jesus, prevailing. God commands me to speak this, and I dare not be silent. Are not these Satan's triumphs—the shame of our profession, and the voice calling down Divine judgments? God calls us to inquire what we have done.—As to the land in general, Observe our divisions—the want of success in ordinances—contempt of the gospel, &c. *Shall I not visit for these things.* What the Lord means to do, we shall not say; but the symptoms are bad. In the

3^d place, Let sinners stop short in their career of wickedness, and say, What have I done! This the Lord calls for. Is it not enough, O man!—wilt thou further rush on the bosses of Jehovah's buckler!—wilt thou not stop short till thou rush into the devouring flame!

4^{thly}, Let saints gather ground of comfort, when they see that they have an High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of their case; and let sinners be encouraged to become supplicants at his throne. But, in the

5th and last place, Let it be remembered, That these tears of pity filled up a dreadful cup of wrath to those who despised then, and will do so still to every sinner continuing impenitent. They caused the fire of Divine wrath to burn more fiercely—they were exacted from a hardened generation: God, who bottles up his servants tears, would not forget those of his own Son. O sinners! think, think what a dreadful cup will be put in your hands!—what a load will fall on you. You who throw dust on the head of the dear Redeemer, and see his condescending pity without a relenting thought, O let this silent, but powerful language persuade, and prevail on your hearts! *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N I I.

JOB xxxiii. 3.

*O that I knew where I might find him! That I might
come even to his seat.*

THE manner of the Lord's dealing with his people, and the various circumstances they are placed in, is a great depth. Though he ever retains his loving-kindness, he does not always make equal discoveries of it. Sometimes he ravishes with his love, and brings into the banqueting-house; at other times he seems to seal up the comforts of his word, and the Sun of righteousness is overclouded. Yet he leaves some marks of his favour, the spirit of ardent breathing—a pledge this of his return. This is not always equally intense: But if the time is near, he will stir up more than ordinary earnestness—by some alarming providence, by example of others, or by recollection of what God had formerly done, he will bring him to himself. *I will go to my first husband, &c.* See case of the Spouse, Song v. 1. Then the soul will be apt to say, as in the text, *O That I knew where I might find him! &c.* This the language of an holy man under distress—God withdrawing his sensible presence, and trying faith and patience; his friends misconstruing his case. Though God hid himself, he cleaves to him, he knew him—hoped better things from him, and therefore cries, *O that I knew, &c.*

This represents the case of many a Christian. These sentiments are indeed foreign to the greater part: But

I persuade myself, that some can adopt this language; the consideration of it may be of benefit to such, and strike fire from the hearts of others. I propose, therefore,

1st, To shew what it is the Christian may be supposed to be breathing after, while the fire burns within him, and he utters such sentiments as these.

2^{dly}, To shew what is imported in the manner of expressing his sentiments and desires, upon such an occasion.

3^{dly}, To propose some encouragements and directions to souls that may be thus exercised, with a view to answer this important question.

4^{thly}, To make a short Improvement, in reflections on this subject.

FIRST, then, I am to shew what it is the Christian may be supposed to be breathing after, while the fire burns, and he utters such sentiments as these. In general, he breathes for God, the living God; peculiar degrees of nearness and fellowship with him; a discovery of his glory—an appropriating sight of it; such a frame of soul as shall make him utter all he feels—to prevail over inward darkness and perplexity; the seal of the Spirit—to hear, as it were, from himself, *That neither death nor life, shall be able to separate from his love.*—More particularly, in the *first* place, He breathes after special intimations of the Divine favour and loving-kindness. Not content with a peradventure, he cannot bear that clouds should be interposing—*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, &c. for love is strong as death.* If the Christian feels his heart warmed with love to God, he cannot be satisfied without felt returns of love. He sees the excellency of
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Christ—O what a treasure! Oh that I could call it mine! It is not the voice of man that will satisfy here—not the approbation of the world. Yea, it is something more than for the person not to be able to deny that marks belong to him. God has a peculiar way of speaking peace—Christians know his voice; it is attended with peculiar energy and satisfaction—God giving light to the word himself—attesting it to be his—sealing it by his Spirit; this is felt by the Christian; this he wants; this is to come to God's seat, and to have the pardon from himself. Then (when God thus blesses) the man is enabled to reflect on electing love; sees his name written in the book of life; Christ offered for him—praying for him—giving the promises to him; and that he will glorify him. Now, such an intimation he seeks and finds, when God is especially present, and the Sun of righteousness shews these things in God's light: But this is rarely obtained, and therefore the Christian is often crying, *O that I knew, where I might find him!* &c. In the

SECOND place, When the Christian utters such sentiments as these, he breathes after the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit, to restore his soul to the lively exercise of grace, and raise him to that spiritual and heavenly frame, wherein he used to have fellowship with his heavenly Father;—for these he waits while the dew of heaven falls. How often do Christians complain of a restraint in this way!—their heart sinking as a stone; their spiritual taste palled; they come to, and go from ordinances, and they have no savour—the heart is locked up, as it were; then the Christian cries, *Awake, O north-wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.—Let my beloved come into his garden, &c. O that it were*

were with me as in months past! Christ draws near me, but I perceive him not: He speaks once, yea twice, but I am dull of hearing. O that I knew where to find the water of life! Why, it is in the exercise of grace that the heavenly intercourse is carried on—in love, faith, and self-abasement; these are Christ's pleasant fruits—the travail of his soul is seen in these workings of the new creature; these are also the exercises the Christian delights in; in these he comes even to God's seat—tells what is in his heart, and what he would have; in these he would make his complaint (See what follows in the chapter.) Now, when the Comforter is far off, he cannot utter a sentiment, and therefore cries out, *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and come down!* &c. In the

THIRD place, The Christian, in this exercise, breathes after a discovery of God's glorious perfections, as they are manifested in Christ Jesus. The one thing he desires is, to behold the beauty of the Lord: As it is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun, so this is a glorious sight to faith; by this desire, Christians discover their heavenly original and destination—it is heaven to see God's face, and heaven on earth, to see it here darkly. Now, where is it seen? In the face of Christ. O it is wonderful! In Christ the Christian sees that God is love—love everlasting. How sovereign! how large in its extent! What beams of glory shine around this name! In choosing Christ; in the promises made to him; in the atonement made by him; the love streaming through him to elect sinners—the very name of Jesus has love to sinners in it. Now, when the man draws near the mercy-seat and reads this, he cannot but cry, *O the height, and the depth,* &c. Then in Christ God's faithfulness is seen—he promised

to give him for a covenant to the people ; he accomplished it, and this is the leading promise ;—he promised to glorify Christ's seed, and he has done it virtually in their head—O what joy in the discovery ! Then holiness, the glory of the divine nature, is here also manifested—sinners are received, but through a Mediator. In a word, Here infinite wisdom is displayed in the person of Christ, adapted, as he is, to his office—in the constitution of his person—in his undertaking, as putting our redemption beyond the possibility of a miscarriage—in answering the design of bringing glory to the Redeemer. Here see also, all the Divine perfections in harmonious and glorious assemblage. Christ, then, is the glass where these are seen ; the sight is interesting, and viewed as a person would do a treasure he could call his own—*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.* Now, a Christian who has got a glimpse of this cries for more—O to come to the mercy-seat ! O to know love passing knowledge ! O for an appropriating sight of it ! My brethren, it is this discovery in perfection, that diffuses joy in the regions of light—that diffuses gladness among the spirits that stand about the throne, where the Lamb is ; there, as here, he is the representative of the Divine glory. This assures the saints of rivers of pleasure for ever : no wonder they wish the veil drawn aside for a discovery of Jesus here—happy soul that gets it. If the Lord gives it to any of you, say, *My Lord, and my God,* I take this as an earnest ; I will keep it as a pledge—keep thou it for me, O Lord, that I may have the use of it hereafter. More particulars might be mentioned, but these are comprehensive of them. I come, therefore, to what was proposed, in the

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SECOND place, To make Remarks on the manner in which the good man breathes out his desires after finding God, and coming even to his seat. And,

FIRST, It is obviously imported here, That the good man has an actual feeling of the withdrawing of the Divine presence, in these instances mentioned. I mention this for the sake of doubting Christians : when they first engage, they often promise themselves a perpetual sunshine—to be fed with the finest of the wheat, &c. Always they are ready to raze the foundation if disappointed ; and to question their state, or to think hardly of God. Christian, God has promised that he will never leave thee, but not that thou should be always on the mount—this thou shalt come to hereafter. If thou art troubled, he pities thee ; but thou knowest not what spirit thou art of. Here a good man is tempted, perhaps, worse than thou art—*My heart failed when he spake*, says the Spouse. Yea, the Christian may feel darkness within—in the word wherein he used to see light. God not answering him in any means he uses. In the

SECOND place, It is imported here, That the Christian, while in this condition, may be put to a nonplus, as to the means of retrieving his case. I know not where : I have tried other means in vain ; I go forward and backward ; I have sought him on my bed ; in meditation, in prayer ; I have gone to the broad ways, where he uses to resort—to sermons, to sacraments. I have tried believing, and my heart is ready to misgive me ; there is an universal deadness about me. If I get a glimpse, it is soon over, and deadness recurs. I thought the last would have been permanent, but it was not ; now I know not where to go next—my hands hang down. I am ready to conclude

clude, that God has put a seal on his word—on the sacrament. What shall I do, and whither shall I go next? O this is a severe trial to the Christian's faith!—Satan improves it—puts the worst construction on it; and tempts the soul to think that God cares not for him. O Christian! if this be thy case, see the footsteps of the flock before thee—this is one of thy trials, and Christ will get glory in the issue of it. But, in the

THIRD place, It is imported in the expression, That, after all, the matter goes very deep in his heart, and he cannot think of wanting the blessing. He meets with discouragements, but whither shall he go? He has taken up his rest here—he loves the name, the way, and must press still forward—though he slay me, alas! I deserve it—though he should never bring me near, I will wait at the gate—I have no other God. The world, in this case, will not satisfy him; he thinks there may be a step further, and Christ will at last lead him to it. An hypocrite, who has another treasure, can comfort himself—pretend what he will, Christ's company is not the thing he values—secure him life at last, and he cares not. Not so the Christian—he would be content, though going through fire and water, to have any evidence that the Lord's hand is about him—the preservation of the life of grace here is a wonder. Thinkest thou that thou canst love Christ, and he not love thee?—thou mayest always see his hand supporting thee. But I hasten, that I may proceed to the

THIRD thing proposed, which was, To mention some *Directions and Encouragements* to souls that may

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be thus exercised, with a view to answer this important question, *O that I knew where I might find him!*

FIRST, Judge kindly of the Lord's dealing towards you, and do not charge him foolishly with having forgotten to be gracious, when thou art saying, *O that I knew*, &c. How dost thou know but his bowels are yearning towards thee, though the time to say, I am thy Brother is not yet come*? The trial is not yet over. Canst thou not trust his wisdom?—Hast thou not desired to put thy soul in his hands for better and for worse? If he design to manifest his own glory, art thou grieved? Could thy comfort be secured in better hands? He designs to manifest his wisdom in timing the blessing—his faithfulness, in bestowing it when thou hadst almost given over hope—his goodness, by giving it in such a manner as may be of the greatest use to thee hereafter; he teaches thee how to live by faith. Meantime he watches over thee—feels for thee, and promises to thee. Unbelief is ready to take the advantage, and thou to say, There is no hope. Now, if thou art a Christian, Believe—read love in the promise. If the hypocrite has any thing like faith, it is when all goes well. Canst thou trust God when every thing in self seems to sink?—then thou comest forth as gold (See case of the disciples, in a storm, when Christ was asleep in the ship.) Judge then kindly, I say. I join several things together, that I may not encroach on your time. But, in the

SECOND place, Persist in seeking God, and you shall find him—and be brought even to his feat, Psal. xl. 1†. See what encouragement Christ gives, in the parable of the unjust judge. Take with you his own words

* See Joseph's case. † See case of the spouse, Song iii.

words—keep them as arguments to be used with him ; and in that way you will succeed.

THIRDLY, Consider also, in answer to this important query, That God is in Christ, and to be found in him alone. Would we see him reconciled?—'Tis in Christ's atoning blood, that takes away sin. Would we see mercy and truth met together?—'Tis in him. Wouldst thou desire to say, *Thou art my Lord?*—Then see him, in Christ, drawing near thee for this very purpose. What is the blessing thou wantest?—Is not the promise as extensive as thy wish? Is it not *yea and amen* in Christ? Does not the ground whereon it is granted take place in him? Is not the administration of it given to him? and does he not give it freely?—Would thou say, *My God?*—Then see, *I will be your God.* Wouldst thou call him *Father?*—*Thou shalt call me Father.* Wouldst thou have sin blotted out? *I, even I am he that blotteth out thine iniquity.* Wouldst thou, then, find him? Come hither SOUL—the Spirit says, Come. I am ashamed—Nay, Christ will glorify himself in thee: But I am afraid I miss Christ—I have a deceitful heart,—I think I cannot believe. Here may be a sticking point with some. Why, dost thou indeed think so?—so much the better: But art thou willing—art thou pleased with the way? Canst thou trust him for all—even for thy right heart? He will bring, he will draw thee—he wants thee.—In a word, If dead to thyself, there is quickening with him—he offers to bring thee to himself. Art thou willing to trust him with this? Then it is done—he will answer for all, and miss him thou shalt not, if this be thy case; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. O! my brethren, it is because we wish to trust ourselves first, and Christ afterwards, that we err—here is our unbelief. Oh! despise not the great salvation. But, in the

FOURTH, and *last* place, Consider the view that the Lord gives you of sitting down at his table, as his voice, calling upon you to come near him—even to his seat. God in Christ is here manifested. Here see, by faith, the blood that sprinkles the mercy-seat, and makes it accessible,—Christ crucified, in his garments of salvation—the blood of the covenant of free grace. Arise, the Master calls thee. Poor soul, perhaps the Lord is preparing for thee a cup of consolation. *Till the day break and the shadows flee away*, and thou seest God's face in righteousness, turn in thither—and give not over till you find him.

FOURTHLY, I shall just name a very few *Reflections*, by way of *Improvement*; and,

1st, See how wretched these souls are, who never knew what it was to be exercised in breathing after God. Ye are far from him; and must perish eternally if ye continue so.

2^{dly}, Let Christians mourn over these sins that are the cause of God's hiding his face. Your iniquities, my Brethren, have hid good things from you. Your sins, Christians, have peculiar aggravations, and need much to be mourned over.

3^{dly}, Rejoice in it, That there is a season approaching, when you shall be near his seat for ever. Tears shall be wiped away, and the Lamb shall lead you unto living fountains, &c.

To conclude—If any soul is brought the length of saying, I would now say, *O Lord, thou art my Lord*, let it abide by it, in spite of Satan and unbelief. Put thy soul, O sinner! into Christ's hands, and he will give thee a good account of it hereafter. *Amen.*

S E R M O N III.

JEREMIAH iii. 22.

*Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord
our God.*

THERE is no part of the Christian's life of greater importance, or reflected on with more pleasure, than the seasons when he is enabled to draw near to God in the clear and distinct exercises of faith; when he sensibly hears God's voice, feels its overpowering efficacy, and finds his heart drawn forth in distinct answers thereto. These are times when God is peculiarly near, shedding abroad a sense of his love, quickening desire, silencing doubts, and leading into the secrets of his covenant; then it is good to be here—to open our mouths, and fill our hearts with arguments, and to bind the living sacrifice to the altar, while the sacred fire is descending from heaven. May I hope, my brethren, that we are met with this view; expecting Jesus, his presence, at the feast. As he has promised to be with us; Are we come to meet him? His language to thee, O Christian! is, *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.* The reply he desires and expects from thee is, as in the text, *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.* Oh, that the Holy Spirit may touch our hearts and lips with a live coal from the altar! O that this may be the voice of every heart! O that the faithful witness may see and remember it for ever! *Amen.* The connection of these words is plain, and needs no explication; they are an answer to the
voice

voice of God directed to backsliding children, dictated to us by the blessed Spirit; they contain the three following points: 1st, An expression of a suitable exercise in a backsliding sinner, *We come unto thee*, &c. —an exercise corresponding to the call and promise. 2^{dly}, A solemn address unto God therein, *Behold*, &c. intimating the souls dealing directly with God in this matter. 3^{dly}, The ground and encouragement of this exercise, *For thou art the Lord our God*, expressing the view that the soul has of God on this occasion. These words are chosen with a view to direct and teach you, my brethren, in the action of communicating; and may He give the blessing. The method, proposed in treating them, shall be agreeable to the above division.

I. To explain the proper meaning and import of the exercise mentioned in the text, *Coming to the Lord*.

II. To represent and consider this exercise, as a direct dealing with God; and to shew what is meant in this solemn address of the heart to him on this occasion, *Behold, we come unto thee*.

III. To set before you that view and apprehension of God which encourages, draws forth, and directs the soul towards him in this exercise, *For thou art the Lord our God*:

IV. To make such improvement as the subject leads to, and the present occasion requires.

FIRST, then, I am to explain the proper meaning and import of the exercise mentioned in the text. Coming to the Lord is one of the most ordinary descriptions of Faith. It is the soul's tending towards God, as drawn by cords of love, the whole heart drawn forth into its proper

proper exercise towards a God in Christ. Observe concerning it,

FIRST, There is a Conformity in it to the Lord's call and promise, and these are taken for our guides in this matter. The Lord apprehends the sinner—speaks the language of the promise by his Spirit—testifies concerning it, as a faithful saying—makes him perceive the voice of God in it. Hence it leads the poor creature to God—has such power as when Jesus commanded the paralytic to arise, or Lazarus to come forth from the grave. Faith in the heart answers to the promise as wax to the seal. So we preach, and so we believe. The soul, then, does not set out in the dark; but lays hold on the cord let down from heaven—Its security is eternal faithfulness on God's part; and the promise and offer lays hold on us, securing us on our part. But, in the

SECOND place, Coming to the Lord, we renounce all confidence in the flesh, and commit ourselves to Christ, to be led by him. Christ is discovered in the promise not only as willing to receive, but as coming to seek and save us. Now, the poor sinner is wearied in the greatness of his way—finds himself not only condemned, but spiritually dead—unable to come to God; finds Christ willing to become his leader, and commits himself to him.

THIRDLY, In coming to the Lord, we approve of his covenant—of Christ's person and offices, and our hearts yield wholly thereto. God reveals a method for saving us, wherein he is to have the glory—Christ, as he on whom our help is laid by him—Christ, as undertaking the work; he reveals the covenant whereby Christ's purchase is to be transferred to us, and we are to become his—the covenant sealed by the shedding

ding of his blood, and ratified by the oath of God. Behold, says God, *my Servant!* &c.—Behold the covenant made with *my Chosen!* Dost thou approve? Canst thou venture here? Art thou satisfied with the whole? The soul deliberately replies hereto—Yes, I am content to trust an unseen God—to venture on his promise: I am pleased with salvation in this way—*this is my rest*, &c. This coming is opposed to being offended with Christ, which is the essence of unbelief,—it asks, How can these things be?—How can this man give us his flesh to eat?—How can I depend on this promise? As for this Jesus, I wot not what is become of him. Faith answers all these questions; or rather teaches the soul to answer them. In the

FOURTH place, Coming to the Lord is accepting his offer, and receiving Christ from his hands. Faith discovers God really and truly offering and giving Christ in the word and sacrament. It looks on the promise (despised by others) as the vehicle bringing heaven to earth, and Christ to the soul. By this does the Father of spirits give us the true bread from heaven. Hence he is said, in the dispensation of the gospel, to send his Son to bless, Acts iii. 26. God deals with us in and by his word; and these who are willing to deal with him by faith, do thus find the treasure. Now, saith God to the soul, my salvation is near—here are the waters of life—here is the flesh and blood of the Son of God—here offered to thee, O sinner! The joyful sound penetrates to the very inmost soul—the heart leaps for joy—has found the treasure in the field, the inestimable pearl, and from God's hands. This secures the gift—he takes it from God's hands. *Amen*, let thy Christ be mine—my Saviour—my portion—My Lord and my God. In the

FIFTH and *last* place, *We come unto thee, &c.* that is, we confide and trust our souls with Christ, to be saved by him in his own way—*Into thine hand I commit my spirit*, Psal. xxxi. 5. Faith views Christ as undertaking this work—every way qualified for it; offering it in his own method to the person himself. Unbelief says, It is not possible, thou flatterest thyself. Nay, let him be true, and thou be a liar, says Faith. Thus the soul goes out in a naked reliance on the arm of Jehovah; devolves its burden on Christ; lays itself at his feet to be a monument of his grace—a royal diadem in his hand. In a reflection on this, the Apostle exults, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, (or trusted) and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.* I know him to be faithful, and that I cannot be plucked out of his hand; he will keep me by his power; sanctify me by his Spirit; lead me by his grace, &c. O glorious and happy case! Gather my soul, O Lord, with such! *Into thine hand, I commit my spirit.* Having then run over the nature of the exercise, I proceed, in the

SECOND place, *To consider it as a direct dealing with God himself; and shew what is meant in the solemn address of the heart to him, on this occasion,—Behold, we come unto thee.*

FIRST, It imports, That the soul, fixed and collected in all its powers and faculties, proceeds seriously, deliberately, and with full bent in this matter. Dealing with God is not a business of yea and nay—is not to be gone over carelessly; fervency of spirit is necessary in every duty, and here especially. Christ fills the soul, and draws the whole to himself—So call up all that is within you; set yourselves full, as it were, be-

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fore God, counting the cost, communing with your heart. O, my soul, hast thou any thing to object? Art thou content to go with him who asks thy heart? Is any thing grievous to thee? Canst thou now, as ready to step into eternity, venture on this hold? The soul deliberately answers, *Amen—Behold, I come unto thee.* I know the Christian is not always thus; he is sometimes asleep, though his heart waketh.

SECONDLY, *Behold, we come unto thee*, supposes God apprehended as present to be dealt withal: The word brings him in speaking terms with us; and the Spirit shews him to be so; the veil of darkness that hides him, though near, is rent in twain; the soul looks not on his essential presence only; but, as it were, into the holy place. In a word, When Jesus is passing by, the opportunity is taken, &c. I speak not of sensible manifestations only, but of Faith's views of the eternal God in Christ.

THIRDLY, The soul's saying to God, *Behold, &c.* calls him as a witness of this solemn transaction. "Lo, "I come to thee; I want it a sure bargain; I want "to be no more my own; I may forget, but thou "wont. If sin solicits, O remember I am thine, and "keep me; let thy presence be my pledge even now; "when I come to thy judgment-seat, be thou my witness. Oh let my record be on high! In the hands of "the Eternal Father, Son, and Spirit." Thus there is a lifting up of the hands to God: But O beware of making it a covenant of works! Let your dealing be in that way which God hath marked out.

FOURTHLY, The soul saying, *Behold, we come unto thee*, calls on the Most High to examine, to direct, and secure him in this solemn transaction. This, as of great importance, deserves peculiar consideration; it is God's under-

undertaking to do this that stays and supports the soul. The Christian cannot trust his own examination—an error at the root might endanger the whole; therefore he sets his heart before God as to this; he wants to be searched deep by him, lest a deceived heart carry him aside; he stretches out his hand to be led—*Behold, we come unto thee*: Thou hast promised to shew the path of life; to lead the blind in the way they know not—“Thou knowest the necessity of this, “and offerest accordingly; thou wilt not suffer my “heart to lead me aside; nor Satan to cheat me by “any deceit, known or unknown to me; I come under thine eye; I know thou art willing to take me; “therefore, *Behold, I come unto thee*; I lay all the stress on thee; if any thing could separate between “me and thee, a deceiving heart would; but *I am “persuaded, that neither death, nor life, shall be able “to separate me from thy love,”* &c. Oh, blessed way!—the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err in it. Blest be the Almighty hand that is stretched out to bring us back to God.—Venture thus, O Soul! Fear not, only believe. I just name, in the

FIFTH and last place, The soul's saying, *Behold, I come unto thee*, imports the man's drawing near with joy and gladness, saying, while God calls, Here I am—A time of joy indeed! finding God, he has found his treasure and everlasting rest. I come now, as was proposed, in the

THIRD place, *To set before you that view and apprehension of God which encourages, draws forth, and directs the soul towards him in this exercise, For thou art the Lord our God.* Coming to God must flow

from a discovery of him. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation makes this discovery.

FIRST, The soul saying, *We come unto thee ; for thou art the Lord our God ;* supposes itself drawn and constrained by a sense of his authority—the command is gone forth in the gospel. Christ, as a King, sits on God's holy hill, and calls thee, sinner, to come, pay homage, and be subject to him. As a King he conquers the heart—brings home the commandment ; the soul dares not disobey, and would not die with weapons of rebellion in its hands for a thousand worlds. This answers many an objection—silences the charge of presumption, and draws, even under a sense of weakness. O it is a sweet cord ! Blessed is thy yoke, O Lord !

SECONDLY, The soul saying, *I come, &c.* apprehends God as his only portion and rest. “ Lord, to whom should I go ? Where find such a master ? I die without the water of life, and thou art the fountain.” This makes faith violent, and to overleap walls. “ If I cannot answer, I must pass by ; there is a want in my soul, not to be supplied but here.” But,

THIRDLY, The soul saying, *We come,—Behold, &c.* apprehends him as a God in Christ, and a God in covenant, and thereupon appropriates him to itself, as his God and Father. Here lies a great part of the secret of true faith—to understand it, consider, That for God to be our God is the very marrow of the gospel ; this relation is the wonder of Heaven—the Person and Office of Christ, God-man, is the foundation of this relation. Union of the Divine and human nature paves the way, and manifests the design ; this makes it practicable and consistent, as it were : Hence true faith specially respects the person of Christ, and receives and rests

rests upon it ; as you are called to do this day. But, then, there is something more remains—a difficulty is started with respect to the particular person, verse 19. *How shall I put thee among the children?*—Thou art unworthy : Not only so, but, says the soul, I see not how it shall be done. The answer is, *Thou shalt call me, Father.* I condescend to assume that relation ; I offer myself to thee therein, in my promise ; I will make thee accept of me as thy Father, thy God ; I will make it good ; thus the foundation of the relation is laid in Christ—the conveyance in the promise—the appropriation and particular application by faith. Now, faith views God speaking as before, *Thou shalt call me Father*—I am so. The answer of the heart echoes it back, *My Lord, my God ;*—“ this is the name “ thou allowest me to call thee by ; I do it, I devolve “ myself on thee ; I give myself to thee ; I trust thee “ with my soul, *for thou art the Lord my God.*” But, in the

FOURTH and last place, The soul saying, *For thou art the Lord my God*, may include a reflection on our being already the Lord's by solemn ties, ratified and confirmed formerly on our part ; this peculiar to those already in covenant, while they renew the 'gift.—*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.* Coming to God, as above, is not one act, but often repeated ; you are called to do it now. Though back-sliding does not break the covenant ; yet it makes particular renewed ties necessary for manifesting it to us in a way of comfort, and for conveying the grace of it. Now, a reflection on this spurs on the heart to come near to God—encourages in hope, that, wretched as we have been, he will not deny himself. Now, the whole of what is said is designed for your direction

tion and imitation—to lead you and me, through divine grace, to say, *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God*, now, and at the table.

FOURTHLY, It remains to make some *Improvement* of the subject, which shall be confined to an Exhortation, reasoning with you, in God's name, on what has been said. The Lord draws near; he calls for your attention—the Most High utters his voice,

FIRST, To you that are pining away in your iniquities—who follow Satan blindfold, contenting yourselves with the name of Christians; to you formal professors—strangers to communion with God; to you he says, *Return, and I will not cause my fury to rest on you*. Oh, come to Christ for a whole salvation! O man, why will ye die? Why wilt thou stop thine ear against the Lord's Anointed?—he is come to bless you! Art thou content to bid adieu to Christ for ever? Hast thou no employment for this Saviour? Wilt thou not condescend to give him a hearing? Dost thou trample under foot the blood of the covenant? Dost thou lift up the heel against thy Lord?—Poor wretch, what wilt thou say when trembling before his throne, if you reject him now? Awake, arise, ere thy doom be sealed for ever! God eyes thee narrowly, and interprets all thy shifts; thou canst no more hide the answer of thy heart now, than thou wilt be able to screen thyself hereafter. But,

SECONDLY, Let me, in God's name, exhort you who are labouring under a sense of guilt, and are looking sad on the ruins of your souls—O return to the Lord; thus saith he, *I, even I am he that blotteth out your iniquity*. A fountain of blood is opened, and you are called;

called—let me compel you to come in ; it is such as you the Lord wants.

THIRDLY, Let me call on these who have their faces towards Zion—whose souls break thither ; who desire to be joined to the Lord. Come forward ; our Master calls you ; all is made ready ; bars are removed ; arms of mercy opened ; the hand of God is stretched out to save—to welcome and receive thee.

FOURTHLY, *Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*, saith the Lord. I will take up all controversies ; I will even glorify myself in healing you. O will not this satisfy and remove your scruples ! Consider, God is present in the ordinance, according to his promise, to give and receive a ratification of the bargain—*Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, says our Lord. The King comes to see his guests. Here, then, is a glorious opportunity—God offering, by the seal of the covenant, to ratify, establish, and manifest his offer and gift of Christ to thee, in a symbol and commemoration of the very Sacrifice by which the Covenant was made ; God is really here to deal with you, O man ! Again he is giving you an opportunity of ascertaining and ratifying thy acceptance ; putting the very pledge thereof in thy hand ; he wants to hear thy voice, and is even teaching thee what to say, both by word and sacrament. Now, What is your answer ?—What say you to God ?

1st, Some care for none of these things ; many think so, though afraid to hear the voice of their own hearts. Well, God will deal with you about it ; vengeance is his.

2^{dly}, Some are discouraged—Through imagined disappointments formerly, they fear they have already gone
wrong,

wrong, and dread they shall do so again. Perhaps thou art mistaken: But, however, say, At thy word, O Lord, I will let down the net; I will not be disobedient to the heavenly vision. Faith, determined this way is sure.

3dly, Some will say they cannot trust their hearts, and are afraid they mock God; hence their hands hang down. Well, thou art not called to trust thy heart: Canst thou trust Christ?—is he in earnest to save thee? Is not setting thy heart right part of his offer? But,

4thly, Some will say, the Lord does not seem now to encourage them—little light or life are felt; they are afraid to speak, lest their speech bewray them; but God may be near, tho' thou knowest not; his presence and way of working, are not confined to sensible manifestations. Farther, a frame is not to be the foundation of your faith: Wrestle, and adhere in darkness—God puts thee to the trial: Faith, in thy case, glorifies him.

5th, and lastly, Some, I hope, answer, While thou sayest, *Seek my face*, my heart replies, *Thy face, O Lord, will I seek*. Welcome, blessed soul, to the Lord's Table; Christ will give you the right hand of fellowship; he will keep thee to himself, as one of his jewels; he will present thee, with exceeding joy, before his Father at last, as one in whom he saw the travail of his soul, and was satisfied. There sin and sorrow shall be no more for ever.

Thus, O Lord, do I desire to answer thee—Thou wilt keep what I commit to thy trust—thy glory shall be great in my salvation. I hope to behold thy Face in righteousness; and when I awake, to be satisfied with thy likeness. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N I V .

JOHN XI. 25.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

YOU are this day met, my Friends, to commemorate an event that shall be had in remembrance when heaven and earth shall pass away; an event which at once, when remembered, should stir up godly sorrow, and Christian joy—thence arise our hopes—thence was transgression finished—thence was access to the throne of grace proclaimed to rebels. You are met to have, by faith, a communion of Christ's body and blood below—an earnest of sitting with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God*. Your entertainment is to be the flesh and blood of the Son of God; whose flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. Jesus, raised from the dead, comes in a gospel dispensation, and in the sacrament, to bless you—to offer you himself, and his grace. Are we a dead assembly? Is the face of the covering on us? Lo, He speaks the words of life—*I am the resurrection, and the life, &c.* These words make part of the history of a noted miracle, performed by the Prince of Life, in raising Lazarus; they were spoken on occasion of his Sister making some doubt of that event. Christ's miracles were not only evidences of his saving power, but were designed to represent it *. Thence Christ takes occasion

* See instance of the man cured of the Palsy.

to declare his office and grace. That it is meant in a spiritual sense, may be seen by comparing the text with John v. 25, 26. In the words, I notice a great blessing represented—*Resurrection and life*: The fountain of it, Christ: The conveyance of it; to whom?—*the dead—dead in trespasses*. Lastly, The certainty of the conveyance, and the blessed consequences of it—*they shall live*. Let us speak and hear in the faith that this is Christ's voice—in the good hope, through grace, that power shall come along with it.—May God, by his word, give us a witness in ourselves, that *Christ is the resurrection, and the life*. What I propose, through Divine assistance, in speaking from these words, shall be,

1st, To explain shortly, what is meant by *resurrection and life*, when spoke of as a blessing to be applied to us.

2^{dly}, To shew in what respect Christ, the Mediator, is called *the resurrection and the life*.

3^{dly}, To illustrate the communicableness of the blessing by Christ, through faith; or shew how he is *the resurrection and life* to us.

4^{thly}, Just mention some of the forms, under which spiritual death may be felt in our souls.

5^{thly}, To make it appear, That, under every form and symptom of spiritual death, Christ offers freely to quicken us in himself; and gives full security, that, in putting our souls in his hand, we shall not miss the blessing.—May our dry bones, while we speak and hear, arise and praise him. *Amen*.

FIRST, *I am shortly to explain what is meant by resurrection and life, when spoke of as blessings to be applied to us*. Resurrection, or rising again, relates either
to

to death temporal or spiritual. In the one case, it is the quickening of a dead soul, Eph. ii. 5. in the other, the raising up and re-building a body brought to the dust of death, John v. 29. Life is the continuance of these blessings, comprehending life spiritual and eternal—including,

FIRST, The quickening of our souls, *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. Low as we are sunk, low does grace follow us. In our natural estate we are loathsome—impotent, alienated from God. All the feints of a natural man, are like the dreams of one asleep—that he runs, when he moves not—that he eats; though he awakes, and his soul is faint. Our first resurrection is an emerging from this—a creating act of power is exerted, like what shall take place when Christ shall descend in the clouds, and open the bars of the grave.

SECONDLY, It includes the continuation and increase of the life of grace, in opposition to the life and power of sin. Grace is a living principle—active and mysterious; while in this world, it dwells in the same subject with sin; just as light and darkness do, in the same hemisphere, at the dawn of day; but at last the sun rises, and shadows retire: As it began from Christ, from him it continues; it is strange that so many waters does not quench the spark: But Christ says, *I am the life, &c.* This accounts for it.

THIRDLY, It includes the raising the body from the dust of death to eternal blessedness, in the enjoyment of God in heaven—our final victory over the grave—our beholding Christ's glory for ever—feeding eternally on the manifestations of Divine grace, and receiving them from Christ, the fountain of life, in heaven for ever. Well, O soul! Art thou as truly spiri-

tually dead as Lazarus was naturally? Art thou despairing of life? saying, *I pine away*, &c. Hear Christ saying, *I am the resurrection, and the life*, &c. though thou art dead, thou shalt be made to live. I proceed now, as proposed,

SECONDLY, *To shew in what respect Christ is the resurrection, and the life.* Methinks the words are sweet. I am a dry tree—*Satan treads my life to the ground*, Psal. cxliii. 3. If I can get life here, it will be beyond his reach. I shall shew you it is here, and how—Now, Christ is called *the resurrection and life*, as Mediator and head of the covenant—receiving all for us—giving all to us. I shall clear this point, by the following observations:

FIRST, The Lord Christ, as head of the new creation, has received the Spirit without measure himself, and communicates him to his people. The Spirit is the immediate agent in the new birth—in forming, preserving, and drawing grace forth into exercise: Now, Christ has received the Spirit to dispense it; hence is called the gift of Christ, John iii. 34, 35, 36.—Hence Christ, in the soul, is called *a quickening spirit*, 1 Cor. xv. 45. Adam's body was a mere mass of matter, till God put in his nostrils the breath of life. So the dry bones, *Ezek. xxxvii. 8.*; hence also it is said, *Christ quickeneth whom he will*—he does it by admitting them to the *fellowship of the Spirit in himself*, Phil. ii. 1. But,

SECONDLY, Christ is the *resurrection and the life*, in regard that his death, resurrection, and glorification, is the root on which our mortification, quickening, and eternal blessedness do grow. His death was the bruising of the serpent's head—the condemning of sin, which

which is the law in our members ; hence we are said, *to be crucified with Christ—to be dead with him* ; his rising again was the bringing up of our nature—our surety, our head, from the grave. His *resurrection* had a power in it, Phil. iii. 10.; hence dead bodies then arose as an evidence of this ; hence *we are quickened with him*. Eph. ii. 5.—risen with Christ, planted in the likeness of his resurrection. His life and glory in heaven, is to the saints what the fountain is to the streams—*Because I live, ye shall live also*.

THIRDLY, Christ risen, living, and glorified, represents to faith the exceeding greatness of that Divine power and grace which is exerted towards the saints, and is a seal of the certainty of its being so exerted. God has shewn, in Christ, what he can do—what he will do ; for Christ was raised and glorified as our surety—this great work was the beginning, as it were, of the new creation. Now, he is a Rock, and his work is perfect, and shall be perfected ; hence I will run to Christ—he calls me to a fellowship with him.

FOURTHLY, *I am the resurrection and the life* : That is, my people, having me as their husband, their surety and head, shall have life, and have it abundantly. I will be in them a well whose waters fail not. I have power over all flesh—I am heir of all things—I have all the promises in my hand ; therefore, he that eateth, by faith, my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath already eternal life.

FIFTHLY, To conclude this head, As Christ's person is mysterious, so is his grace—hence our life is said to be *hid with Christ in God*, Col. iii. 3. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou bearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whether it goeth* : But, though mysterious, that does not hinder

hinder its being real and felt. Now, this doctrine may perhaps be like that of our Lord to the Jews, when he spake of giving his flesh and blood—How, said they, can this man give us his flesh to eat. Unbelief, disallowing of Christ, will have it, that there is no beauty or comeliness in him, why he should be desired. Here, therefore, I shall endeavour,

THIRDLY, *To illustrate the communicableness of this resurrection and life from Christ by faith; and shew how it may be really a resurrection and life to us.*

FIRST, Consider, O man, that Christ is ordained of God to be our life! Hence he is said to be made of God to us *wisdom*, &c. as truly God's ordinance to us for this purpose, as the brazen serpent in the wilderness was his ordinance for life to the wounded Israelites—the waters of Jordan to cure Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy. God has declared it in the gospel, and hath sealed Christ accordingly—Shall not infinite power succeed?—shall not infinite wisdom go right to work?—shall not God, who designs to honour himself and his Christ in this way, perfect his praise by it?

SECONDLY, You must have observed, that Christ's person and office, and his being substituted for us, fits him to be the resurrection and the life to us. As God-man, he has an inexhaustible fulness of grace and truth; as Mediator, appointed by the Father, he has a right to bestow the blessing; as substituted for us, the fulness of grace laid up in him necessarily flows out to us; by making us heirs, as Testator of the new covenant, he makes a legal conveyance of the blessing—we beheld him as the only begotten Son of God;

God; and out of his fulness have we all received and grace for grace.

THIRDLY, It is by a mystical union with Christ, that we live in him; and the making of this union is God's work: *Israel shall be saved in the Lord*—an important matter this! God, the author of salvation, fixes this as the manner of it, there is no participation of salvation without it—there is no fruit without abiding in Christ; when not in him the person is cast out as a branch: But if this is a mystery, how shall I deal about it? I answer, It is God's work, as the joining of soul and body is. But,

FOURTHLY, Faith is the way of our being planted in Christ—even faith apprehending God's strength, as we are apprehended by him. The apostle (Phil. iii. 10.) viewing Christ as his life, desires above all things to be in him: But how shall he dwell in us?—by faith, Eph. iii. 17. But how deal with God, even in this way?—lay hold on his strength, Isa. xxvi. 5. Where is it?—in Christ, in the gospel; the rod of strength is sent forth out of Zion, Psal. cx. 2. Faith, apprehending a God saying, Wilt thou be made whole, goes surely to work.

FIFTHLY, Observe particularly, That as our living in Christ is God's work, so the certainty of our doing so arises from God's promise. Our life is hid—it is matter of promise; but God warrants the gift of grace, and calls us to it—and swears we shall not feed on ashes. Well, I take God at his word; I am content to trust an unseen God, to put my dead soul in his hands—faithful is he that hath promised. As Jehovah, he will give a being to the word of grace—I take it, it shall bring forth its issue; for it is God's work.

SIXTHLY,

SIXTHLY, I only add here, That the communication of spiritual life is a mystery, and no wonder it is so—we know not our natural life—we cannot comprehend the creation of things natural; and no wonder we do not comprehend this. Thus I have endeavoured to speak of our life—of itself—of its fountain—and its communication. These things, if in any measure understood, lay a foundation for what follows: Therefore I shall,

FOURTHLY, *Mention some of the forms and symptoms under which spiritual death is, and may be felt by us.* Our Lord puts the case at its worst, which is particularly noticeable—a fulness of misery, answering the fulness of grace in him. Hear, O Soul, him who knows thy frame, thy case! Feelest thou an estrangement of affection from God—enmity against him? An incapacity of discerning the things freely given thee of God?—Canst thou not see their glory, truth, suitableness, at least not as thou wouldst? Feelest thou the burden of unbelief? so that the estranged heart cannot trust God—cannot think him in earnest; but disallows his way of salvation, and rejects it. Feelest thou hardness of heart—a soul like a rock? Can you as easily make water flow from the flint, as godly sorrow from it? Feelest thou the strength of corruption, like a torrent, bearing all before it?—thy resolutions, vows, and hopes, like the fruit, which, when looked at, is eaten up? Hence discouragement—fearing the Lord will not save, &c. *Finally*, Is the whole frame of thy soul felt to be an opposition to God—like a man out of his way, every step he takes is false? And art thou, then, bound by Satan, and so long struggling under thy heavy chain; or so weak, that thou

thou canst not struggle any longer? Then, I ask, Wilt thou be made whole? Christ says, *I am the resurrection, and the life.* But what is that to me, sayest thou? Yet, sinner, thou art much concerned here. To shew thee that thou art so, I shall, in the

FIFTH place, Make it appear, *That, under these, and every other symptom of spiritual death, Christ offers freely to quicken thee in himself; and gives full security, that, in putting thy soul in his hands, thou shalt not miss the blessing.* Here I propose to deal with souls, in God's name, who question thus—*Can these dry bones live?* Is Christ here, and come to give me that life?—may I depend on it? I answer, Yes—I lay before you the gospel evidence of this, 1 John v. 11. *This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son **. But I wish to deal clearly with you, my Brethren, on this. Christ must be glorified, and a fair witness given for him; therefore suffer me to expostulate this point with you, adapting the expostulation to the variety of difficulties that may arise in your minds.

FIRST, I say, That thy present circumstances themselves speak for Christ. Did not misery and death come by the first Adam? How much more shall life by the second? Thou feelest death—thou hast a witness of the reality of its communication: Shall Christ be less a quickening spirit, than Adam a killing one! See the Apostle's beautiful reasoning on this, Rom. v. 17—19. O, my soul, is not the second Adam able to set thee on high, if the first sunk thee low!—Can there be any thing in thy case beyond his reach?

* See also John vi. 37. Rev. xxii. 16. Isa. lv. 1.

*

F

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, Does not Christ declare, *How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not?* Does not he declare this even of enemies! Will you dare to lay it off yourselves on him? Dare you say I would, and he would not! Dost thou say, I cannot believe? Where, man, canst thou get faith? If thou wilt not look to Christ for faith, thou mayest as well say, I will not deal with the Physician, because I am sick! —*Object.* But, Oh! I believe he would, if I could believe. Go further, say, I believe he is willing to help my unbelief. Or say, Christ is willing to save me to the uttermost—I need salvation to the uttermost—I need it in himself. Sayest thou this, believing him in earnest?—be it so. I say, in God's name, it shall be so. But this will be further proved as we go along.

THIRDLY, Does not a God in Christ take the work on himself, so that it is blasphemy to say, “How can these things be?” Does not God undertake to make this life in his Son effectual? Does not God undertake to keep from deceit? Does not God give his security, that the promise shall be a secure mean of communication?—Is not the question then, sinner, *Wilt thou be made whole?*—wilt thou be obliged to sovereign mercy?

FOURTHLY, Does not God declare, O man, That he designs to glorify himself by saving in Christ to the uttermost*? Is not this an evidence that thou mayest put thy soul in his hand? Shall not thy soul be safe, when embarked on the same bottom with his glory? What dost thou but dishonour God now! Here he is, willing to be glorified in thy salvation—*Mercy and truth are met together, &c.*

* Isa. xlviii. 9—11. Ezek. xx. 22.

FIFTHLY,

FIFTHLY, Does not God make the offer of Christ in sovereign mercy ! Is it not because even so he will ? If merit of thine were in question, thou wouldst not do well to intermeddle, but will God be angry with thee for coming to Christ ? Darest thou say so ! He'll be angry if thou come to seek protection to sin ; for that's not quickening, but death. O, men and brethren, rejoice in sovereignty—view it joined with a promise, and then how beautiful !

SIXTHLY, I ask—Does not Jesus, in the text, set before thee an instance, to prove that any supposed peculiarity in thy case, is no effectual bar either to his power or to his love and grace ? Is thy disease deep, of long standing, attended with grievous circumstances, proof against many means ? &c. Does it seem that Christ cares not for thee ?—See how he did with Lazarus. The context will suggest suitable reflections here.

UPON the whole—Does not God come as low, in the way of offer, to meet, to seek, to save thee, as thou art sunk by sin ! Does not he follow thee into the desert—into the land of spiritual forgetfulness ! Does he not address thee as dead ?—What ! my Brethren, Does God mock us ! Shall we mock him ! Do you trample on the gift ?—or do you distrust the giver !—or are ye setting bounds to his power and grace—saying, Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further ! Do ye resolve to go away without the blessing ! Are ye to take away a bad report of the promised land ! Are ye to say, the fountain is inaccessible !—Who is the man that singles out himself against the Lord this way !—Or who is it that engages his heart unto the Lord ; because he is *the resurrection and the life ? he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

I now proceed to the *Improvement* of what has been said; and begin with these Inferences,

1st, How excellent and divine is the Christian life! Living with Christ—in Christ—in Christ, who died that we might live! O man, thy head is in heaven—the spring of thy grace is at the throne of God!

2dly, Let us triumph, in Jesus, over the powers of darkness. Is Christ our life? Then, O death—O sin, where is thy power! O grave—O Satan, where is thy victory! Associate yourselves, my enemies, and ye shall be broken in pieces; for God is with us.

3dly, Let it be matter of joy, that the fountain of our life shall remain with Christ for ever. The streams of this river, that make glad the city of God, does not dry up. In heaven, they shall flow from the Lamb in the midst of the throne, &c.

4thly, From what has been said, we may see how this ordinance of the Lord's Supper is the means of nourishment to a believer. It holds out Christ crucified—Christ as our life; is designed to seal the giving, and security of our life in Christ; is one of these streams in which living waters flow from the fountain, and a pledge of our union with it.

I now conclude this discourse with an *Exhortation* from what has been said—Arise ye dead, in the name of Christ. Speaking in this name, the exhortation is not in vain—*Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for his dew is as the dew of herbs*, Isa. xxvi. 19. His name, through faith in his name, has made many whole. Answer not, I cannot arise. I bid you do it in Christ's name. He is near that shall help you. Particularly,

1st,

1st, Arise backsliding souls, whom slumber hath seized. Behold the Bridegroom comes—he brings a blessing with him. Have you gone into Satan's territory—have you lost your first love? Lo the Son of God calls; and the rod of his strength, I hope, comes along.

2^{dly}, Arise, in the name of Christ, ye whose graves seem, or seemed, to be fast sealed up. Is Satan watching you? Have you been long in the grave? Have you looked for the morning till your hands hang down? The voice of the Son of God is come—he commands thee to arise. He calls, clothed with that power that raised himself from the dead; he puts it forth in a promise, Ezek. xxxvii. 12—14. *Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.* Lay hold on this strength! *Isa. xxvii. 5.*

3^{dly}, Arise ye weak and diseased. Up souls, whom the poison of the old serpent has benumbed! Come, Christ, the resurrection and the life, asks thee—*Wilt thou be made whole?* I repeat the question, in his name, Wilt thou; or art thou chusing to sit still?—What! when Jesus is passing by? When he is asking thee, What wilt thou that I do unto thee?—O Jesus, that my soul may live; that my eyes may be opened! O pass not away—I will not let thee go except thou bless me!

4^{thly}, Arise, and drink deep, ye who have formerly come to the fountain of life. Jesus knows you, calls you

you by name ; loves to see you around him ; is come to destroy the veil and face of the covering—unsealing the fountain. Come, and drink !

5thly, Arise communicants—go to the Lord's table, to him *who was dead, and behold he is alive, and liveth for evermore ; and because he lives ye shall live also*. Is thy soul pointing towards him, though with stammering lips ? Come, eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, that ye may have life in you !

6thly, In the name of Jesus—Arise all of you. Come to Jesus—he calls you to bless you. He has abolished death, and conquered him that had the power of it. Arise, ere a seal be set by God on your graves—'Tis Jesus himself calls you—God eyes you ; perhaps it stands on a narrow point betwixt God and you, Now ! now is the time—Oh make use of it ! Go not from this house without the blessing—make sure work ! Put your souls in Jesus' hand, and because he is *the resurrection and the life ; and truly, though thou art dead yet shalt thou live !* Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

2 COR. i. 20.

*For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him
amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

THERE is nothing wherein the faith and obedience of Christians is more concerned, than in a right understanding of the gospel promises; these are their songs in the house of their pilgrimage—the glasses whereby they look at the land afar off—the charters and security of the heavenly inheritance—the breasts of consolation, from whence God's little ones are nourished—the conveyance of the testimony the Spirit gives concerning Christ, and the immediate means of communication between heaven and earth. God's word, my brethren, is magnified above all his name. [If you are Christians, you must have had communion with him by it. The Psalmist pleaded the promise in his prayers, Psal. cxix. 49.; he expressed the blest effects of it on his heart, ver. 92, 93.—*Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,* Rom. i. 19. The prayer and faith of the saints is just an echo of it back again; and how sweet is a right apprehended promise to a saint!—they rejoice as one that finds great spoil, and triumph, in God's strength, over sin, the devil, and the world, even before actual victory commences! Now, Christian, knowest thou not sometimes a difficulty with respect to the application of a promise?—Does not thy soul often labour to get hold of the cord of love let down from heaven?—

Here

Here God speaks for thy encouragement—points out the way in which true believers view and apply the promise. The Apostle had been speaking to the Corinthians of an intended journey to them, wherein he was disappointed: As this might be attributed to fickleness and instability, and weaken their credit of the gospel preached by him, he cautions them against this inference; and asserts the certainty of the gospel, as preached by him. This gospel contained promises of grace and glory; he shews the certainty of them, by their being built on the Rock Christ—a declaration of high importance; and which, through Divine grace, I propose to illustrate, in the following manner:

I. I shall premise some considerations, tending to explain the nature and application of the gospel promises.

II. Shew the relation of the promises to Christ, and what we are to understand by their being *yea, and amen, in him.*

III. Shew that this constitution of the promises, and that faith, which is declared by this view of them, *is to the glory of God.*

IV. I shall make some improvement of the subject.

FIRST, *I am to premise some considerations, tending to explain the nature and application of the gospel promises.* Observe in general, That the Covenant of Grace is called a *Covenant of Promise*, Eph. ii. 12.; every blessing of it, relating to time or eternity, is the matter of a promise. The Apostle (Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12.) declares the nature of it, by a bundle of sweet promises, relating to a renewing the heart;

heart; wherein faith, repentance, and obedience, are included—the pardon of sin—a relation to God, &c. Hence it is by faith we come into the bond of the covenant. Now, with respect to the promises, observe,

FIRST, That God's promises extend to all the wants of a sinner, and contain a fulness of grace. God viewed us, in the making this covenant, as utterly lost—dead in sins; if the provision was to be effectual at all, it must correspond to this: Hence God says, *Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help*—setting the one against the other, Hos. xiii. 9.; thus there is a promise of pardon, respecting our guilt—of a *new heart*, answering to the total depravity of ours—of softness, in opposition to hardness—of repentance—of faith—of enlightening*. Finally, There is nothing wherein any sensible sinner among us feels a want, but there is a promise corresponding thereto; hence the call for faith, even from those who see every thing wrong in themselves, Isa. 1. 10. Here is an arm of power—an arm of power exerted in faithfulness, to lay hold on dying souls. What way faith gets a distinct foundation, as to these promises, will afterwards appear.

SECONDLY, Observe, That the blessings contained in the promises are, in the way of offer, directed unto all that hear the gospel. God declares these to be applicable in Christ—to be received from him, and with him freely. Men are for receiving them in a way of their own; hence they ask and have not, asking amiss: But God makes his people take them from his own hand, *without money and without price*. Now,

* See Is. xliii. 25. Ez. xxxvi. 26, 27, 31. Zech. xii. 10. Is. xxv. 7.

this offer is clear, Acts ii. 39. and xiii. 26. so that the fountain is open; whosoever will may come and drink.

THIRDLY, Observe, That all the promises are of free grace, as the spring and source of them, Ezek. xxxvi. 32.; that the blessing is to be bestowed for God's name sake, is, either expressly or implicitly, wrought into every promise; and oh, a promise for God's name sake is sweet, and puts a plea in the mouth of an unworthy sinner! This is a prop to faith, of a lasting nature, for *God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* But, in the

FOURTH place, It is a part of the Spirit's work and office to lead the elect to a right application of the gospel promises. As the light of the sun is necessary to illuminate the earth, and discover the glory of nature, so is that of the Spirit to shew divine things in their proper lustre—*In thy light, shall we see light,* Psal. xxxvi. He testifies of Christ to the soul—he is his witness in the word; by the word of promise is his witness to the heart—he takes what is Christ's and shews it to the soul: Hence see where we are to be directed, and what account to make of the discovery of grace.

FIFTHLY, The promises are the immediate ground of faith; as Christ, in the promise, is the ultimate object of it. They are, in one sense, like Jacob's ladder, the means of communication between heaven and earth—they bring Christ near; and an apprehended promise, by Heaven's appointment, gives a poor man as sure a right to him as his—as sure ground to know that his sins are forgiven—as sure evidence that Satan shall be bruised under his feet, as if a voice from heaven pronounced it. Now, the true foundation for faith's apprehend.

apprehending a promise lies, in a great measure, in the discovery of its relation to Christ; and the right God gives a poor sinner to take it with and through him. To make this obvious to you, I shall,

SECONDLY, *Endeavour to shew the relation of the promises to Christ, and what we are to understand by their being yea, and amen, in him.* Two things are obviously intimated here: That the promises stand connected with Christ—they are leaves of the tree of life, for healing the nations; so connected, that separate from him (in the exercise of our hearts originally) they have no healing power. Another thing here intimated is, That in him, in his complex character, person and office, they are ratified, established, and become proper, applicable, nourishing food to poor souls. This will be explained in the following observations:

FIRST, All the promises are originally directed to Christ, as the Head of the Covenant—they are directed to him, for his seed, as the promise of life was to Adam, under the first covenant. So the Apostle, Gal. iii. 14, 16. shews that the blessing of Abraham was to come on the Gentiles—to us by Christ. How to be received? Through faith—By the promise being made to Abraham's seed (Christ), not a saving blessing falls on a soul, but in consequence of a promise made to Christ for that effect, Isa. xlv. 3.; thus it pleases God, that in Christ the fulness should dwell: All of us that know Christ will be pleased with it also; for having thus, as mediator, received the treasure, he calls us to a fellowship with him in it: Hence arises our right—hence a clear conveyance—and hence the exultation of faith, as we shall see hereafter.

SECONDLY, All the promises of God, and the blessings contained in them, were purchased by the blood of Christ. Hence called a *purchased possession*, Eph. i. 14. and we are said to have redemption through his blood. Now, this removes a legal objection out of the way of the blessing being applied to us. Justice pled against us—Could we be put among the children, or get childrens bread, consistent with God's honour as an holy Judge? Can a poor guilty sinner, standing self-condemned, plead the accomplishment of the promises? Yes; for it is a just and righteous thing for God to promise through Christ—if they were purchased by that blood, they must be applicable to a poor sinner, such as I.

THIRDLY, The promises are administered by Christ, in consequence of his office, both in the way of offer and application. God has appointed him, as Mediator, to be the great Prophet—has anointed him as his King over Zion. The Father hath sealed him, and ratified all his purchase, offers all freely to us: In consequence hereof he comes in the gospel—speaks to us truly—is sent to bless us, &c.: Hereon he calls souls to submit to him, Mat. xi. 27, 28. and compare the connection, John xvii. 2. Thus, the promise comes clearly to the sinner in the way of offer; by his Spirit also he applies it to the heart. Oh! believe then, my brethren, that Christ deals with thee; and take the blessing from his hand.

FOURTHLY, It deserves to be particularly observed, and at length insisted on, That in and by Christ, in his person and office, and by God's dealing towards him as Mediator, the certainty and faithfulness of the promise is evidenced and manifested. As we are to be conformed to our Lord, so God, in him, has set an example

ample to us: In him we have an example that God's callings and gifts are without repentance—he sent him long after the promise first went forth: In him we have an example of the faithfulness of particular promises; all these were made with a view to us, and run in the same channel with those personally made to him: So the promise of pardon is connected with that of his acceptance; by his acceptance, God has established and declared this for the promise of pardon. The promise of our deliverance from spiritual enemies is connected with, and confirmed by his conquest—a conquest which God had promised him. The promise of our sanctification is connected with the promise of the Spirit to Christ. The promise of our being raised up from the ruins of corruption is connected with his being raised; that of our resurrection at last with that of his resurrection. You will see the saints often viewing the promises in this glass, (so the Psalmist, Psal. xvi. near the end; with this view also, see the Apostle, Heb. xiii. 20. Yea, by the exaltation of Christ, our head, God has virtually begun the performance of these promises that relate to the bringing us to glory, and this comprehends them all. But, in the

FIFTH and *last* place, It is by virtue of their relation to Christ that the promises become applicable to us; it is in virtue of this, that sinners may, in God's way, put their names in the promise. By our dying Lord they are left as a Testament—we inherit in his right—heirs of God, because joint-heirs with Christ: God has laid up this treasure in him—in him for his elect seed: He calls us to him, calls thee, O sinner, poor, blind, and naked, to him! In and with him he offers thee, and, if thou art believing, gives thee a right to all these blessings of the covenant that are well ordered

dered and sure: Yea, in and with him, gives thee what is necessary for making the bargain sure (because thou hast such an heart as is not to be trusted), even the leading of the Spirit—the opening of the eyes—strength to the weak—all that thou wantest. O for faith! We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves; it is the blasphemy of cursed unbelief that says we are. I come now to the third thing proposed, which was,

THIRDLY, *To make it appear that this constitution of the promises, and the faith in the heart that is directed by this constitution of them is to the glory of God.* This the Apostle seems pretty expressly to declare. It includes these two things,—That God is glorified in our salvation, or in us; and, that the method whereby he secures and conveys this salvation is to his glory. Now, the apprehension of this is a great encouragement to faith, and answers many a doubt formed by unbelief. If this method be to the glory of God, faith acquiesces in it, and therefore, observe,

FIRST, That God glorifies himself here in the exercise of his mercy, in laying the foundation of our salvation so deep and sure—putting our stock in the hand of such a Trustee, where it was so safe—adapting the salvation he brings about, to our wretched situation.

SECONDLY, God is glorified in us, by a manifestation of his infinite wisdom. Does he by this means raise children from the stones? Does he provide against the treachery of our wicked hearts? Is the whole of this scheme so consistent, that mercy and truth are met together? Does a revenue of praise arise (even actively) from such once-lost vessels of wrath?—Then may we indeed say, *Here is the power and wisdom of God.*

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, God is glorified, by laying a consistent foundation for a display of his faithfulness in all the promises of the covenant—the foundation. Christ is chosen by God for this purpose—*Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* In Christ all the promises shall be accomplished; for his name sake will he do this, and cannot but do it: In Christ he gives a pledge of his faithfulness; and the making out of all the promises, for which the pledge is given, shall be matter of admiration and praise in heaven to all eternity. In the

FOURTH and *last* place, By the constitution of his covenant, and the certainty of the promise in Jesus, God brings about his grand design of glorifying his Son Jesus Christ. This is his invariable design, in Christ his soul delights, and he has sworn that he will set him on high, and make him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth: Thus he brings the praises of saints to him as their centre; this makes the salvation of every individual a monument of his praise—glorious encouragement this to faith working by love! Having thus spoken of the nature of the promises—their relation to Christ—and the glory of God, as manifested therein. It remains, to add a short *improvement* of this subject.

FROM what has been said, Let us learn the true method of viewing, applying, pleading, and resting on the promises. In this the comfort and security of God's people does very much depend. There is, my brethren, a false method of viewing a promise—a pretended faith, which, because not corresponding to God's way, is a plant to be plucked up; perhaps merely founded on the impression a word makes, or
seems

seems to make on the mind. When persons apply comfort to themselves, not their due by God's appointment, it is not in consistence with God's whole scheme; persons are most likely to understand the true scheme, that know the difficulty of getting at it in a satisfactory manner. Now, ask a Christian as to the way of dealing with God about a promise, he will answer you, perhaps, (on the principles laid down) in the following manner; or, for substance, to this purpose:

1st, "I apprehend the suitableness of the promise to my circumstances—exactly answering my case. Who can be meant in a promise of light, but the darkened? To whom must the promise of a new heart be directed, but those whose burden is a hard heart?" &c. Perhaps, also, he apprehends a suitableness in the manner wherein the promise is made—*For God's name sake.*

2^{dly}, "I apprehend it as conveyed freely through Christ—I come to God on his own terms, *Without money, and without price*: Here is bread, and to spare, bought and purchased—a blessing streaming in blood, even the blood of the covenant! Oh, it is a trampling on that blood for me to refuse or despise the purchase of it!—It is righteous for God to give it this way."

3^{dly}, "I look on this as coming with, and making part of the offer that Jesus makes me with himself—a blessing, to the fellowship whereof God calls me in him. I come, not unauthorized—not I know not why—not to offer an affront to the Majesty of heaven: He says, *Arise, come away*. I follow my Shepherd's voice."—The faint's faith, his prayer, are echoes to God's call.

4^{thly},

4thly, "Taking Christ at God's hand, I take the promise upon his right, and the warrant he has given me to do so. Taking Christ and the promise is not to be separated. God's order is, Taking Christ, and with him all things. Christ's right is clear by purchase—I humbly come on this right; by his Testament and Covenant, he has warranted me so to do."—Hence he says, *Look, O Lord, on the face of thine anointed*, Psal. lxxxiv. 9.

5thly, "I see it is God's meaning to apply the promise this way; and his faithfulness is inwrought into it to secure the accomplishment. It is God's will to save freely, he is glorified in giving this way, and is pleased to declare that faith gives him glory."—There are many things under each of these, not easily expressed but to God: Nor will a Christian feel all, equally at every time in the exercise of faith. And here, Oh mind, my brethren, that it is the Spirit alone that teaches to speak the language of Canaan. But, to proceed,

SECONDLY, From what has been said, See ground of encouragement for the exercise of faith under many particular cases. I designed to enlarge here, but, for want of time, must now only name them: As,

1st, Under a sense of great guilt—*Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*, Isa. i. 18.

2dly, Under the feeling of much darkness, and inward hardness of heart—*A new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

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3dly,

3dly, Under perplexities arising from felt deceitfulness of heart, so that you cannot trust it—*He that trusteth his own heart is a fool*, Prov. xxviii. 26. See the Psalmist's way—*Into thine hand I commit my spirit*, Psal. xxxi. 5. Finally, Whatever God commands in the way of duty, he promises in the way of grace.

THIRDLY, See that faith, in receiving Christ, receives in and with him the substance of things unseen.

FOURTHLY, That though the accomplishment of the promise tarry, we should, and have reason to wait for it—*For all the promises of God are in Christ, yea, and in him, amen.*

THE heads of an exhortation, since I cannot enlarge on them, shall conclude the subject.

1st, Approve of God's method of saving sinners in Christ Jesus.

2dly, Welcome the great Redeemer to thy heart in particular.

3dly, Trust thy soul and salvation to him in his own way; for, God hath said it, Thou shalt not in that case miscarry. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

IF we considered the difficulties that lie between us and Heaven, without considering, at the same time, the glorious grace of our Redeemer, whereby they are overcome, we would be ready to say, There is no hope—Our hearts would sink like stones within us. What misery and darkness has overspread our natures! How low are we sunk in ignorance! At what a distance from God! Even when we hear of a remedy, we are so slow to understand, that we know not the way to it—Every circumstance in ourselves just shews our misery aggravated. If God had not provided a counterpart, we should sink in despair: But, behold, the lowness of our case lays a foundation for the triumphs of his grace! The great Creator again puts his hand to the work, and raises our nature from the grave, where sin and spiritual death were triumphing over it. To mark the progress of this glorious work should be your study. To lead you to it (through Divine grace), is our work. You have already heard some of the previous steps of it, from Rom. vii. 9.; and God making his way into the soul. I now propose to lay some of the sequel before you.

You have seen the sinner awak'd to feel his misery—to see his weakness. Darkness covers him; but the morning cometh after the night—*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth, Hos. vi. 3.—For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*—In these words, the Apostle makes a transition from speaking of the miserable case of the unconverted, to speak of the contrary case—of Christians. They are enlightened; they see the Sun of righteousness; they have the path of life shewed them. Now, whence is this? *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, &c.* A new creating power is put forth—a work compared to the first creation, and evidently analogous thereto. What is the substance of it? It is an illumination, or shining from on high. But what is the subject of this work? Is it the head only? No; it goes deeper—into our hearts. What is it that there is discovered? *The light of the knowledge of the glory of God*—the very source and spring of our salvation, and the manner wherein it is applied. *Lastly, In what medium? In the face of Jesus Christ:* He is the image of the invisible God. In his person is seen, the stooping of infinite condescension and compassion—the depth of mercy—an example of faithfulness; and the method wherein all shall flow forth, so as to lay hold on the poor sinner. Deep is the subject, much treasure is hid in it; if it remains hid unto us as to practice, we are lost.—Father of lights, verify it in my heart, and the hearts of the hearers, that we may have
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the witness in ourselves, and in preaching on this subject. In treating of this discourse, I propose, through Divine assistance, (Lord grant it)!

I. To shew what is implied in the comparison and analogy of the work of illumination in the soul, to that of the first creation, *when God commanded the light to shine out of darkness.*

II. To consider the nature and circumstances of this work of illumination; particularly, as reaching to the heart, and transforming it.

III. To represent and illustrate the immediate end and design of this work; namely, *To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God;* and shew what kind of knowledge of that glory is hereby produced.

IV. To shew how this glory of God is manifested to the soul, in the person, office, and undertaking of the Lord Christ; together with the necessity and excellence of this method.

V. Make a general improvement of this subject, besides what may occur as we go along.

FIRST, then, *I am to shew what is implied in the comparison and analogy of this work, to that of the first creation.* Several important truths arise out of this view of the matter, tending to settle it on its proper foundation—making the finger of God more evident—leading to give the great author of it his due praise.

As particularly,

FIRST, That the state of the soul, previous to this work, is a mass and chaos of confusion, darkness, and perplexity. The earth at first was formless and void, not reduced into that beautiful order that is now stamped on it. God was to raise up a monument of praise to himself—to enstamp marks of his wisdom, power;

power, and goodness on it : This was its then situation—no beauty, nor comeliness ; darkness covering the face of the deep. Such are our souls by nature ; overwhelmed with thick darkness—bands on our loins, that we cannot move ; the very blot, as it were, of the creation. Sinners are naturally ignorant of God, know not his nature, otherwise than in words—ignorant of his faithfulness, and therefore will not trust him ; oppose to his declarations of mercy—how can these things be ? Not knowing him as in Christ, we measure him by ourselves, and square all our methods of dealing with him by this rule. This is the essence of unbelief and natural ignorance ; the remains of it are found to work so in the saints. I may appeal to your experience, if this is not found at the root of all your troubles : Hence God's call is disregarded, his promise is looked upon as a root out of a dry ground ; even when our mouth is stopt by the condescension of his word ; yet, a sullen unbelief will prevail after all—Hence many a poor sinner has laboured long, with the words of consolation in his mouth, and yet his soul remained a stranger to rest. All this flows from a darkness of heart ; the gospel is hid—God is not seen in Christ. In like manner is the natural man filled with gross ideas of every divine thing ; he will not assent to the holiness and sovereignty of God, in suffering him to be in such circumstances—he perceives not the suitability and excellency of Christ, as a Saviour worthy of God to appoint, and fit for us to receive. The delight of Christians in a crucified Redeemer, is a tale to him—their communion with him, a mere chimera. Now, all this is attended with a perplexity and confusion of spirit ; he gropes in the dark.

dark—stumbles on the mountains of vanity, and feels a want, but knows not how it is to be supplied.

SECONDLY, It is here intimated, That this illumination of the Holy Spirit is the first step in the restoration, or new creation of our souls. At first God began his work by reducing order out of confusion, by saying, *Let there be light*. This was to illustrate the glory of all his works. Even so, when God sent Ananias to Paul, the first thing is to restore his eye-sight—an emblem this, of dispelling the thicker darkness on his soul. The poor creature is like one born blind, who has heard of the brightness of the sun, but cannot perceive it—the entrance of such knowledge being shut out: Even so has he heard of Christ—talked of him—heard that there was healing under his wings; but, has this given him rest? Not at all: Such knowledge is too shallow to fill the great void in the soul. Therefore God begins with him, as with a child; what he knows not, HE teaches; what he knew before, HE teaches in a quite different manner. Believe it, the common apprehension of Divine truths is often a kind of veil, hiding the particular knowledge of them from us. Now God is bringing into a new world—As he draws with the bands of a man, and deals with us agreeably to the constitution of our rational natures; so he first opens the eye, and brings the soul from looking to coming. O sinner! thou hast destroyed thyself, but here is thy help!

THIRDLY, The comparison of this work to that of the first creation, shews us, That God, the Father of lights, is the author of this gracious work. It was above the highest angel to call light from darkness at first; it is likewise above created power to do it in the present case. He only who hath heard and learned
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of the Father comes to Christ: Hence the Apostle prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, Eph. i. Means of themselves cannot do it; these reach the head, this must sink into the heart. Paul, therefore, the learned Pharisee, cries out, *What wilt thou have me to do?* There is indeed a false plant of knowledge, not ingrafted by our heavenly Father; but this was plucked up, if I may say so, when the sinner was made to die, Rom. vii. 9. Christians know this well—after tugging at the oar till they are wearied in the greatness of their way, God teaches in an hour what they could not have learned in ages. Remember, God is jealous of his glory, in this he will have no rival. But, in the

FOURTH place, The comparison of this work to that of the first creation, leads us to observe, That the holy sovereignty of God is manifested in this work. He created this world when he would; from all eternity was he happy in himself; he would have, and must have continued so. Of his own will he begets us again, and calls the things that are not when he will; he can use what means he thinks fit—make a very unexpected visit to the soul, and continue it, under spiritual exercise, as long as he sees meet: He can make the discovery in early youth, or riper age—he selects whom he will for that purpose; every circumstance is, in a word, under his direction—*Even so Father, it seemed good in thy sight.* Hence our Lord tells us, *The wind bloweth where it listeth, &c.* It is good to learn this, and better to have the practical sentiments arising from it; we must know our times are in his hand; we must learn not to fret, or say, *How long?*—Not to stint God to particular means, and take it amiss if we are refused—not to say, *There is no hope.*
Sovereignty

Sovereignty may display itself, in the exercise of mercy, when things look worst with us, and we are at the point of giving over. Think, sinner, God's thoughts are not as thine. To him it is equally easy to save by many or by few; and, in like manner, to save when thou thinkest thou art within a step of being desperate. But,

FIFTHLY, We may observe, That this enlightening of the soul is a creating act of power, whereby God calls the things that are not as though they were. When light was made, he commanded it. Creation is indeed one of the many things we do not distinctly comprehend—All God's ways are a depth; so is the case here. We cannot tell how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child, neither can we trace, intuitively, this work of the Spirit—it is a secret of infinite power; but its effects are known. Now, we know it is such power as was exerted when Christ was raised: Here we see the exemplar, after which this act is formed—*Christ is the first-fruits*; it is acting over again on the members what was acted on the Head: Hence we are said to be created again in Christ. Christ gave us an example of it in the case of Lazarus—he cried, *Come forth*; but when he did so, an invisible creating power went along. So he enlightens externally by his word—he utters his voice in that still small sound; but, Almighty power seconds it—experience may confirm this. Can greater opposition, or contrariety, be conceived, than is in our darkened minds? Are we not shut up and left? Is our wound healed by our speaking peace? No, no—God arises, and his enemies are scattered, and not till then. Here again arises comfort and direction: Poor creature, Canst thou say thou art beyond the reach of this right

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hand? Cannot God both level mountains and exalt valleys?—What thinkest thou? Is it not comfortable to have such a mercy in such a hand? Verily, if all the legions in hell were set in array, methinks the faith of this might overcome them all—" Though darkness " and the shadow of death cover me, thou, O Lord, " canst bring me back from thence." Again, Is the mercy thus in God's hand? Wait on him for it; he calls thee to him for this purpose; plead for thyself what was given to thy Surety. The God of peace brought Jesus again from the dead, he did it as the God of peace—manifesting how he was willing to deal with finners. Has he not called thee to a fellowship with his Christ? What wouldst thou have more?—" Is " it so, O God, in very deed!—Then my soul shall not " be left in hell, for thou wilt redeem it." *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N V I I .

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

ANY of us, my Brethren, who have been led to a right view of the unspeakable grace of God in Christ, will readily have said, *Lord, what is man!* How wonderful thy love towards him! A worm so exalted—a poor rebellious creature, unable to profit thee, brought back by such amazing steps! When we think of God acting over again the wonders of creation—displaying hidden stores of grace, not revealed in that work—waiting so long on a sinner—sending his Son to die for him—his Spirit to work in him; all this, I say, is unto us a depth: Faith alone can in some measure fathom it—faith, immediately respecting the testimony of the Eternal—looking on Christ incarnate, as the wonderful instance of condescension, which, though deep itself, yet manifests and clears the rest of the wonderful acts of grace; it reasons, with the Apostle, Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* I am led into this train of thought, by considering the subject before us—God manifesting the method of his grace, so wonderful, so deep, yet so suitable, and so worthy of himself, and so fit for the case of poor sinners.—To what was said, in last sermon, to illustrate the compa-

rison and analogy of the Spirit's work in illumination, with the work of the first creation—when light was commanded out of darkness. Add, in the

SIXTH place, That the comparison of the work of illumination in the soul to that of the first creation, leads us further to observe, That the effect of the power of God on the soul is immediate and sudden. No sooner was the almighty word spoke, than light shined—he commanded, and it stood fast that same instant. So is it with the work of illumination in the heart, the preparations for it are perhaps long, the advances towards it slow: Yea, God may be beginning the work in an hour when we think not of it; yet, in reality, the work of regeneration is an instantaneous work. God takes the sinner lying in his blood (for in his blood he is lying after all the work of conviction that is past), plants him in the living Vine—sends his Spirit into the soul, and makes him a new creature: You will see this, if you consider, that in regeneration we are purely passive, and have no more hand in it than in our first creation; it is God's immediate work—there is exerted a secret efficacy of Almighty conquering grace: He says, *Let there be light, and there is light.* At first, perhaps, the life is so small, that it is scarce perceptible; but it is the very same seed that opens afterwards, by degrees, and brings forth blossoms and fruit, in faith, love, hope, and every Christian grace. I own this is one of the secrets of conversion. There is a path which the Vulture's eye hath not seen; but here let us stand still, and see the salvation of God, like the Israelites, when beholding the sea divide to let them out of Egypt—God passed by us, and said, LIVE. What a vast step—passing from death to life! Over this has

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the arm of Jehovah drawn us—this is the beginning of miracles : O Christian, many more are to follow—many deliverances in life ; an illustrious and ever-memorable one at death, when sin, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall be rooted out entirely, and this again shall introduce a scene of wonders to all eternity—*Amen.*

SEVENTH and *last* place, The comparison and analogy of the Spirit's work of illumination in the soul to the work of the first creation, intimates to us, That the work of God in regeneration is invincible. Almighty power was put forth, when at first light was called ; darkness could prevail no more, its reign was at an end : Even so here, the stronger One comes, even Christ, travelling in the greatness of his strength ; and Satan, the strong man, must yield to his power—the bars set in his way are but as briars and thorns ; he comes, skipping over mountains and hills, as in the day when he commanded the discord of jarring elements to cease—order to arise out of confusion ; even so he works here, and who shall let it ? Ere we proceed further, let me offer a reflection or two upon what has been said, as to the analogy and comparison of the first and new creation. Use

1st, From what has been said we may see, That the conversion of a sinner is a glorious, felt, and irresistible testimony to, and evidence of the perfections of God. When God saw his work at first, he was pleased with it—it was good ; he saw his wisdom, power, and goodness manifested ; but he says, *Behold, I make all things new* : A new creation being designed, the Lord Christ is to be the head of it. Here the attributes of the blessed God are more largely discovered,
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in themselves and their harmony. In the saving and converting of a soul Almighty power is put forth—wonderful counsel takes place! justice, glorified in the punishment of angels, is again magnified; and mercy, hitherto so much manifested, shines forth gloriously. Each of the persons of the blessed Trinity are manifested in their various operations: The Father electing, the Son redeeming, and the Holy Ghost applying—all concurring to bring the sinner to God. Here a more glorious monument appears, to the glory of God, in the conversion of one poor sinner, than in the fair creation itself; he that believeth hath the witness in himself of all this.

2dly, Has the Lord, O Christian, overcome and dispelled such darkness in thy first conversion, and come over such difficulties? Let this strengthen thy faith, and hope, in future troubles; he that delivered from the mouth of the lion, will deliver from every evil work. Will he who beheld thee in thy low estate, and even then loved thee, will he now forsake thee? Cannot he, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, turn the shadow of death into the morning now? Cannot he, who came over difficulties, seemingly insurmountable then, come over them now? Fear not—only believe. Hitherto we have viewed the Spirit's work on the soul more at a distance; we have followed the Apostle, in comparing it to the first shining of light in the world; but, if God will be pleased to draw aside the veil, we must look deeper—if he opens our eyes; if our experience goes along, we will see a glorious treasure behind—a fruitful source of comfort and direction. Let us therefore, in the

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SECOND place, Consider (through Divine assistance), *The nature and circumstances of this work of illumination; particularly, as reaching to and transforming the heart: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* And here, for distinctness, and with a practical view, let us

1st, Propose some observations, in a doctrinal way, concerning the work of illumination, and the properties of it.

2^{dly}, Declare unto you its efficacy on the heart, as the proper seat of it.

3^{dly}, Offer some remarks on that saving illumination which reaches to the heart, in opposition to that which is of a common kind, and rests in the head.—May the Father of lights give us light, and make us to feel what we speak and hear.

FIRST, then, *I am to propose some doctrinal observations, concerning the work of illumination and the properties of it.* In the

FIRST place, Observe, That the Holy Ghost, the third person of the ever blessed Trinity, is, in the œconomy and dispensation of grace, declared to be its author. We have already shewed, in general, that this work is of God: But it must be more particularly observed, That, as the scripture declares the mystery of the blessed Trinity, so it assigns to each their peculiar share in the work of man's redemption—unfolding of this is one of Heaven's wonders, and is seen with admiration by angels and saints! Now, the Holy Ghost is expressly said, in scripture, to be the author of this work, it is called, *The renewing of the Holy*

Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 5. We are chosen to eternal life, *through sanctification of the Spirit*, 2 Theff. ii. 13. The electing love of the Father, giving his Son Christ to us, and us to him, is declared to be the spring of all. The Lord Christ is the purchaser of the inheritance—All the mercies of the covenant are the sure mercies of David; that is, of Christ. The application, in every step, from beginning to end, is the Spirit's work: Hence our Lord declares his person, office, and mission at large, in the xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of John; he was to be sent by him from the Father, to act in his name—be his Vicegerent—dwell in his peoples hearts—be their Comforter—bring all things to their remembrance, and was never to leave them. Thus, all the Persons of the Godhead have their due—all are jointly glorified, and all jointly exercised in raising a glorious fabric from the ruins of the human nature. Now, the office of the Holy Ghost is extended to the whole of the new creation—he dwelt in the head of it, in the human nature of the Lord Christ; in him he dwelt in a way of pre-eminence, above his fellows: But he condescends also to make a temple for himself in our polluted souls! He enters there, first as a Spirit of light and life—his entrance begins the fellowship with Christ to which we are called. Oh, miracle of condescension! He sees our vileness, and knows that we will deal very treacherously—grieve him, and quench his operations, yet he never leaves us; he opens our closed hearts, and guides our stammering lips in our dealing with God. We are dull scholars, and slow of heart; he teaches us with patience. O let us reverence his blessed person and work! These lips shall perish from the earth that dare to
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treat his work or message slightly. Hail, thou eternal God! Descend, descend! make room for thyself: With awful reverence we would bow before thee!—As thou condescendest to be sent, so of thine own will thou comest: By thine own grace, and under thine own guiding, I would say, Come in, come in and dwell in this heart for ever—Amen.

SECONDLY, As the ever-blessed Spirit is the author, so the word of God is declared to be the means of this illumination, and work in the soul. It is the glory of God, in the person, or face of Christ, that is to be manifested; now, the word is a transcript of this—God, in his love and grace—Christ, in his garments of salvation; these are there evidently set before us—this is the glory of the word—this makes it so delightful to the saints. Hence arises its efficacy, through the Spirit—it is the power of God to salvation; for *therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 16, 17. When strangers to God read or hear the word of God, they are like a man walking over the field where the treasure is hid, but they perceive it not; or, like him who possesses the field, but knows not its value. These words, that to others are dry and lifeless, to a Christian have a flavour of heaven—are like a glass wherein he sees the Lord Christ; and, seeing his glory manifested, believes on him. We may remember, Christ promised the Spirit to his disciples, to *bring all things to their remembrance*, John xiv. 26.; particularly the words Christ had spoken, many of which, when uttered, we see they had no spiritual views of. Now, this promise is common to all them that believe—it is fulfilled in the experience of every saint; let us therefore see what it imports—Was it only to bring to their memory, in

a common way, what they had heard Christ speak? This was indeed partly the case—So far it was fulfilled in them, and is so daily in the saints; but this was not all, it could not be—the strain of our Lord's discourse shewed the contrary. There was to be a remembrance, and a teaching—an enlightning of their hearts by these truths, making to feel the favour of them; a bringing them seasonably to their case, to illustrate matters wherein their souls, or ministry, were concerned. *In a word*, The teaching them with that demonstration which enlightens, warms, and satisfies the soul. Thus Peter remembered Jesus' words when a spirit of godly sorrow was given him: Thus the disciples remembered what Christ had said, Luke xxiv. 8.; and thus they came to remember the accomplishment of the promise, concerning the Messiah, in him, John xii. 16. *Finally*, Thus were their hearts enlightened with the understanding of the gospel-mysteries, as laid down in the Old Testament; as may be seen in the Acts of the Apostles throughout. Ignorant were they formerly, and slow of heart; but God enlightened their minds by his Spirit, through the word—*This honour have all his saints*. The method of it shall, if the Lord will, be afterwards explained. O let us ask the assistance of the divine Teacher!—Christian, thou hast hitherto come but a short way, in comparison of what remains. Oh! man, the well of salvation is deep, and of thyself thou hast nothing to draw with—Will not God give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Sure thou hast got some crumbs! Well, these are but a little, and a pledge of what is to come. “Lord, I will ask in the faith of it, and of thy promise that I shall receive.” *Amen.*

S E R M O N V I I I .

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

THERE is nothing more necessary for us to know, than the methods by which God brings back lost creatures to himself; such knowledge illustrates the excellency of God's loving-kindness—confirms Christians in the faith—assists them in self-examination, and directs them a-new to the fountain of life. Returning to our first husband, and acting over again the first transactions, wherein our souls were united to God, is often a saint's proper exercise. For these and the like reasons, have I proposed to lay before you the *nature of the work of illumination*: Happy for us, if God chuses this season to make useful what we hear. Some times, when dry bones are prophesied over, they live—when Christians muse, the fire burns; and God bears witness to the word of truth, by leaving the seal of it in the heart (see what was proposed on the second head.) We chuse to proceed step by step in this explication; and therefore observe, in the

THIRD place, That, as the blessed Spirit is the author of the word, the means of illumination; so, in this work, the word is borne testimony unto, as representing the glorious character and grace of the Lord Christ. Here lies the substance of this great work;

and therefore it deserves special consideration. There is a blessing in the name of Christ to a poor sinner!—an anointed and approved Saviour (for that's his name), is a joyful sound: Such he needs who is fallen at God's feet as one lifeless and dead—fallen among those who have stripped him, wounded him, and left him for dead, Luke x. 30. Others pass by, and look on him as a stranger—he must perish in his wounds if no help comes. Lo! the gospel brings an intimation of one who will be like the tender-hearted Samaritan, who has bowels of pity, and balm for the wound—will heal freely—is at hand, and his salvation near! Such a testimony does the word bring of Christ to the poor soul; and adds, withal, that he is come to seek and to save such; that he calls for thee in particular, that he may save thee; that he will not, on account of past offences, cast thee off; that he will not do the work by halves, but save thee to the uttermost—save thee freely. Is not this life from the dead?—just such as the poor sinner wants: But this is not all—Hypocrites and apostates have this external revelation, and yet wander in everlasting darkness. All of you, perhaps, say you believe this. Perhaps the poor creature in question heard it himself before, and yet was dark as night, and his wound remained uncured: If he applied here, under his distress, he was beat off, perhaps, with, How can these things be? Hence he was more discouraged than before. But now, *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, shines into his heart, and gives him *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*: The Spirit gives a testimony to the word of salvation—in a secret silent way breathes into the very soul—shews it to be the word of the faithful Witness—manifests its reality,

reality, in such a way as casts of all doubt about it; this makes the difference. Formerly the soul was like Christ's disciples going to Emmaus, their eyes being holden; now they are open, and they know him. Thus is the Spirit promised, to testify of Christ, John xv. 26.; and thus he performs his office, and makes his own word the vehicle of this testimony: But adds to it a demonstration and power—casts a divine light on the promise—manifests the method of its laying hold of the soul, and the method of the soul's laying hold on it: Withal, there is a perfect suitableness to the particular case.—I forbear entering on particulars, as to the several parts of Christ's office; and the different promises which, in their power and reality, are attested to the heart. Only I make an *appeal* concerning all this—first, to the word; and next, to the experience of all them that believe. Blessed be God, these are realities!

FOURTHLY, The Spirit of God, thus shining into the heart, is made to see this his testimony to be divine and suitable—fit to be depended on now, and to eternity: The eyes of the understanding are opened, to see what is the hope of our calling, and whereon it is founded, Eph. i. 18. A soul in depths cannot be pleased with man's word: Let it promise never so fair, that is not sufficient. It is God he hath to do with—it is from the mouth of the Lord the answer of peace must come; therefore, here comes in the mystery, which, in words, is owned by all; but indeed understood by few, *viz.* God speaking to *THEE* in his word. This word is effectual for all the purposes of thy salvation, as if directed by heaven to thyself alone. Sinners, who know not God, think he cannot be in earnest—these things are too great to be true. A correspondence

dence also with God by the word they do not understand ; it is faith alone that perceives this. They will not let themselves think that God can speak any good to them, whatever he may do to others. But now God is manifested, and deals close with the heart—the heavenly vision can be no longer refused ; his faithfulness is wrought into every promise—is prevailing over every difficulty ! Now, as a faithful saying, It is worthy of acceptance—a fit bottom for the soul to venture out on to eternity ; and, therefore, here the soul chuses its rest. But, in the

FIFTH place, By this work of the Spirit, perplexities, doubts, and fears are removed. They that stumble, stumble in the night, and know not whither they go. God has laid one foundation, and there is but one ; while off this, no wonder we find no rest. The soul, by wrestling under its burden, while a stranger to Christ, only entangles itself the more—*The bones wax old, while he roars all the day long*, Psal. xxxii. 3. At last the burden grows too heavy to be borne, and he is shut up in the toils ; a dismal situation this to a darkened soul—horror without and within ! Or, when matters go not this length, something like to it takes place. Now God arises, and his enemies are scattered—clouds, long gathering, are dispelled by the shining of the Sun of righteousness ; a case so involved, that the soul saw no possibility of its being extricated, is now made clear : This is the Lord's doing—it is one of the secret wonderful steps of his grace. But, in the

SIXTH place, This illumination is clear and distinct ; and shews in a consistence with the whole design of God's grace. I do not mean that it leaves no darkness at all in the soul, nor that it is equally distinct in all,

all, nor that it gives a full apprehension of every principle of religion; but, so far as it goes, it is clear. God teaches not as man does—he knows our frame—he moulds the heart as he teaches it—he opens and strengthens the eye of the soul, while he causes the Sun of righteousness to shine—he shews the truth as it is in Jesus. Now, there it is in its very fountain—he discovers it in its connection with all his glorious perfections, and as declarative thereof. One great thing a soul will be exercised about will be this, God's nature, as apprehended by him, seeming to stand in the way of his salvation; but the discovery of grace to the soul makes the contrary evident. God is just in justifying—holy, even in pardoning an unholy sinner. The gospel is a scheme for bringing glory to God, and his Christ; this is the centre of the plan. Now the Holy Ghost shews the sinner's concerns to be managed in a consistence herewith; he hears God say to Christ, in his Mediatorial capacity, *Thou art my servant, in whom I will be glorified*. Now this, as to the execution and fulfilling of it fully, must be transferred to elect sinners. If thou art a Christian indeed, I should think it strange if such a view is not familiar to thee. It is this, my brethren, that paves the way for faith—silences the charge of presumption—keeps the soul from wavering in its dealing with God. There is something inexpressibly glorious in Divine light shining this way; the contrivance appears so worthy of God—all its parts necessary—nothing wanting that could be wish'd; a treasure, filling the whole soul—obviating all its difficulties—providing for all its wants. Nature cannot devise a remedy suited to the extent of our misery, fit to be proposed to a dead soul without strength: The Spirit of God now clears it up.

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All the notions men ever had of the Divine mercy, or wisdom, are but darkness, in comparison of what this shews. These thoughts explain what I mean by clearness. But, in the

SEVENTH place, This illumination is sweet and refreshing to the soul—*Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun.* Carnal men hear of Christ with coldness and indifference; if pleased at all with the gospel, yet not as their own portion and rest. There is a pleasure men have in finding out of any truth; there is the receiving of the word with joy for a season, arising, perhaps, from a good mood, or the like: Yet, after all, they are as Michael, Saul's daughter, was with David; they despise Christ in their heart—Is not this the Carpenter's son? says unbelief. Christians, on the other hand, find truly a *Divine savour* in truths, when manifested by the Spirit—it is their food; they rejoice in it, as they that find great spoil; no work of God is so marvellous as this—“*I count all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; give me Christ, and let the world take every thing else.*” I may add, Every new discovery has a new savour; it does not pall the spiritual taste—the treasure can never be exhausted. Which leads me to observe, in the

EIGHTH place, That this illumination is continued, In carrying on the work of grace in the soul—*It is a shining light, shining more and more to the perfect day.* The eye being turned on Christ can never be altogether turned away again: “Oh, turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and keep them on thyself,” says the soul. The Spirit, being given, abides with the saints for ever; they know the need of this. What they have already got does not serve for future purposes.

purposes. Dead and cold apprehensions of Christ, my friends, produce but a dead faith; and therefore, the witness must be renewed. The treasure is indeed inexhaustible—Every opening of the eye lets the soul see an immense abyss behind. Therefore the soul's daily work is, Searching and prying deeper. This is a gradual preparation for that state, where darkness is totally expelled, and the soul is made like God, who is LIGHT itself. The most enlarged apprehensions of the soul will then be so far from bringing it near the end of its search, that it will only make it capable of looking deeper and deeper to eternity—without ever coming to the bottom! *O the height and depth, the breadth and length, of the love of God! How unsearchable is his grace! His love is past all knowledge!*—May I, O Lord, be knowing more and more for ever. Amen.

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SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

IT hath, in all ages, been observed, That carnal minds never have a right relish for Divine things: Every day's experience makes this very obvious. Natural men perceive not the things of God—they are foolishness to them: While Christians admire the glory of Christ, he is to them, *A root out of a dry ground*; while they find their food in the promises, to the others they are foolishness; what they speak of walking with God, is to the natural mind unintelligible. Divine things, my Brethren, are spiritually discerned; and, therefore, are hid from the wise and prudent. They, and they only, who hear and learn from the Father, by the Spirit, come to Christ. All the duties of a Christian, so far as they are acceptable, are connected with the promise and giving of the Spirit—all his comforts flow in the same channel; this should be learned and minded, as one of the fundamental lessons in Christian Practice.—We have already shewn you something of the nature and manner of the Spirit's work, in enlightening the souls of men. I only add, in the

NINTH and *last* place, That there is something secret and mysterious in the manner of his operation—

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The wind bloweth where it listeth, John iii. 8.; its effects are seen and obvious, but the manner of its arising, and its various turns and motions are secret; so is it with every one that is born and led by the Spirit—nor ought this to be surprising. Even in common providence, God's way is said to be *in the deep, and his footsteps not known*; he supports all nature, and yet is himself invisible; he encompasseth our path, and we perceive it not. Thus, *He puts in his hand by the bole of the door*, and our bowels are moved; he teaches us to go, taking us by the arms, yet we perceive not that he heals; nor is this to be confined to the beginning of the Christian life. Every subsequent working of the Spirit is of the same kind; he is the breath of our nostrils—he directs our steps. Yet often, as we know not how our souls act in our bodies, so we know not how he works on our hearts. A question comes here to be shortly discussed of some importance, particularly in practical Christianity. Since the work of God's Spirit is such, and of such importance, it may be asked, How is an exercised soul to plead for his assistance? And what may be the foundation of its faith in such a plea? This will readily be proposed by poor exercised souls, sensible of their weakness and blindness—feeling loads which they cannot shake off—hard hearts which they cannot soften, and scales on their eyes which they cannot remove: They doubt if they can plead such a gift; if God gives them a title to do so—not seeing themselves to be Christians, or not having the assurance thereof, they think it were presumption to ask such a blessing, reserved for children. Now, observe, It is a mistake to suppose a Christian can plead no promise, but when actually assured of his being in a state of

grace ; this were to confine a life of faith too much—to exclude it from that period when it is most needed. Whoever, then, thou art, poor heavy laden soul, sensible of thy blindness, seeing the need of Christ and his grace, thou surely art called to this exercise. For thy direction, and the foundation of thy faith hereon, take these hints shortly.

1st, In pleading with God for his Spirit, have in view the promise, as respecting such as thou art. See Isa. xliv. 3. and xxxv. 57. To whom are these promises directed? To the fearful in heart—to the thirsty and dry ground. God's call gives thee a right to plead them; their relation to Christ may encourage thy faith concerning them—*To thee is the word of salvation sent*, Acts xiii. 26. always remembering, that it comes through Christ alone.

2^{dly}, Plead on the necessity of this Spirit and grace for answering God's call. God calls thee to himself, and makes it thy duty to come. Alas! thou canst not; but here is grace to enable thee; this is one of the foundations, ever to be remembred, of the gospel, That where God calls to duty, he offers strength to the performing thereof; respect being still had to Christ in whom it is.

3^{dly}, Plead on the fulness and freedom of the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is full, extending to all thy case—therefore it extends to the present; it is free—such as thou art may plead it for thyself. We are apt to dishonour God by mean and unworthy thoughts of his grace: He that views it by faith, views it in Christ; and is reconciled to God's way of giving it by and with Christ alone; and he will find a marvellous suitability therein. In the

4th place, Put thyself, poor sinner, in God's hand, and abide by it, that thou wilt wait for him—with him is the fountain of life. Say then, *To whom shall I go, O Lord?*—patient waiting and wrestling will prevail. Hitherto we have treated of the Spirit's work of illumination itself—as flowing from the Holy Ghost—as performed by the word—as to the manner wherein it is performed; and, as to several of its circumstances and properties: But we must still take a nearer view, if God enables. Let us consider it then, As actually in the heart, its proper subject and seat—*God hath shined in our hearts.* Common graces and gifts enlighten the head—Carnal men may know much of Christ in speculation. It is our concern, my Dear Brethren, to have him formed IN US—his Spirit living and acting in us. This is indeed the foundation of our fellowship with him, and of all practical Christianity. Let us therefore endeavour, as proposed, in the

SECOND place, on this head, *To declare unto you the efficacy of this shining and illumination in the heart, as the seat of it.* This Divine Light spreads itself over every faculty of the soul—acts on the understanding, will, and affections, according to their several natures: Particularly, in the

FIRST place, It has a transforming efficacy on the heart, and changes it into the image of him who is light itself, 2 Cor. iii. 18.; it is a beam from the Sun of righteousness—from him in whom the brightness of the Divine glory shines; he shines not useless—he makes us, in our measure, to have a fellowship with him. This work is a sealing of the soul; the impression answers to the seal, its original; it changes the whole

whole frame and temper of the soul—infuses into it the likeness of the Divine Holiness and purity—makes the soul fall in love with it, and loathe itself so far as it is unlike it; love what God loves, and hate what he hates. Thus the Divine image begins to be restored: Christ rejoices to see the travail of his soul begin to be accomplished; he sees the Spirit, whom he has purchased and sent, transfusing the very resemblance of himself on the heart—it is seen breathing heavenward—laying up its treasure there; delighting in intercourse with God, as Jesus did—looking on God's glory as its chief concern, as he did—longing to burst all its bonds, and fly to his presence—groaning like one pent up in a prison, because absent from him: Hence it cannot bear itself because not like enough to God. Godly sorrow is one of the first exercises of the new creature—the heart is kindled and set on fire by it, and the flames ascend in holy and spiritual sacrifices: Hence God is declared to love his own image in his children, though he hates their sins; he loves to hear their voice, because it is an echo to his own in the word—to see the countenance of the new creature, because it is the image of his well-beloved Son. Never think enlightening grace has reached your hearts while there is no resemblance of God formed in thee. God's Spirit dwells not where he makes no temple for himself, and thou wilt have no heaven hereafter who hast nothing of it in thee now. Now, this resemblance is carried on, in the heart, by the progressive work of illumination; the outlines are drawn at first, but they are filled up by degrees; this is declared to flow from further beholding the glory of God: New sights of Christ leave evermore a savour of him on the heart, and ripen the fruits of grace. The shining out
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a-new of the Sun, after a winter of decay and desertion, melts the frozen heart—causes the streams and spices to flow forth. Thus the sun shines on the rock, and it is rock still; but, on the garden, and it blossoms and flourishes. *Finally, When he shall appear, we shall be like him: Why?—We shall see him as he is.* Thus it appears, from first to last, that the illumination of the Spirit of God transforms and changes the heart into his own image. In the

SECOND place, The efficacy of this illumination of the heart consists further in this, That it makes the soul see eye to eye with the word, and manifests the secret treasures thereof—*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant,* Psal. xxv. 14. As it is brought to a conformity with God, who is truth itself; so also with his word, the transcript of his glory. Hence the Psalmist prays, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law,* Psal. cxix. 18.; there was a treasure there formerly, but it was a treasure sealed up: Now the scales fall off—the face of covering is rent. It is marvellous to think what consonancy there is between the heart and the *word*; it finds it quick and powerful, penetrating into its inmost recesses—describing its case graphically, and calculated as if it were for itself; it brings arguments to the mouth, such as it desires to express in its dealing with God; it represents HIM, such as the heart has felt him; the soul perfectly accords to the testimony there given concerning Christ—is ready to subscribe with the hand thereto—is pleased with him in the character he is there described in—and finds him there such a Saviour as it would wish him to be: The commandments of the *word* are likewise suited to the renewed nature, and
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it to them; it judges them all to be right, Psal. cxix. 111. 128. Hence it is declared, That the word is milk to the new born babe—the food it relishes, and that is fitted for it; the very spirit of the gospel is transfused into it, and it can deal with God in no other way, because it is its nature.

THIRDLY, This illumination draws forth the whole affections towards a God in Christ. That of a common kind gives a view of him, but not as the soul's portion. The pearl being discovered, the wise merchant wants to buy it: God fills the heart—*Whom have I in the heavens but thee?* Psal. lxxiii. 25. Give me Christ, or else I die! *I count all things loss and dung for Christ*: Every affection of joy, love, desire, and complacence, find here their centre, as it were. Hither, therefore, the soul tends, and is satisfied. In the

FOURTH place, This illumination of the heart is the principle of the new life, even the life of faith in it. When God reveals his Son in the soul, it consults no more with flesh and blood: A correspondence with heaven, in a new channel, is discovered, and actually carried on—Faith in Christ is the very breath of his nostrils. This life is derived in a way the world knows nothing of; a life of justification and sanctification both—both hid in Christ—both received and derived through the new opened channel. Hence the Christian can rejoice in Christ under an actual sense of vileness, and live in faith of grace to be derived from him, and brave spiritual enemies under a sense of prevailing sin; both are principles of life in the heart, and both flow from this heavenly gift. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

THERE is nothing more absurd, or contrary to the gospel, than the hopes that the bulk of professors entertain of heaven, and the thoughts they form of a work of grace; they act as if they thought religion the business of one hour—and that the way to heaven, prescribed in the gospel, is not necessary. A religion resting in the head is all that many seek—they are utter strangers to heart-work. Ask them what they feel of religion: Most part feel nothing at all; others only a transient flow of affection, soon over—Ask them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost? They know nothing at all of this matter. Now, my Brethren, let us ask ourselves, how we have laid the foundation.—What is likely to be the end of these things? Is this to be reconciled to a life of grace? Is this like what the Apostle here speaks of himself, and all Christians? Nay, my Brethren, Christianity is heart-work: Therefore, says the Apostle, *God hath shined in our hearts.* We have already shewn, in part, what is the efficacy of this work of illumination on the heart. I add, in the

FIFTH place, That this shining in, or into the heart, makes it yield, with submission, to God's will in the

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gospel,

gospel, and be content to be saved by him on his own terms. There is much latent pride in our hearts: Hence we do not call on God—and our high imaginations stand out long; but the power of God must bring them down. We think it hard to become like little children—hard to deny our own knowledge—hard to quit the holds of nature; and, in faith, to follow an unseen God: These stand as bars in our way; and these are unperceived when all goes smoothly on with us—then we see not one half of the deceit of our own hearts; but let us be pursued by the avenger of blood, and then, perhaps, we will feel them indeed. Meantime, we are fond of making terms concerning our favourite lusts: We are unwilling to take on Christ's yoke; and, in our hearts, we call him an hard master; we cannot think of parting with the bosom lusts; we cannot think of an habitual holy life—it appears too dismal to be chosen, and crossing to all our schemes of pleasure. Such are the snares Satan lays for us, and in these are many unwary souls caught; but here matters are changed. The enlightened soul becomes like Paul, when going to Damascus—The proud persecuting Pharisee cries, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* An evidence, that when light shone around him, it also shone into his heart; he becomes soft and tractable, and insists on no terms of his own making: “Lord, I am a poor wandering creature; I have been feeding on ashes; I cannot direct myself; I am like a little child, or worse—for I need to be taught over again; I deserve nothing but wrath; I cannot call any of thy terms hard; I desire to be saved in thine own way—by thy own security in the gospel: *What wilt thou have me to do?*” Thus the poor prodigal is brought under subjection to the Father of spirits;

to own that HE is just—that he has nothing to answer. This is the first-fruit of the implanted Spirit of the Son. Oh! my Brethren, it is a joyful thing to God's people to see their Lord coming, thus to take vengeance on his, and their enemies: An hard, obstinate heart is a terrible load to them, they love to be melted down before the Sun of righteousness; and it is one of the glorious evidences of Christ's power when they are so. But, in the

SIXTH place, This shining in the heart has such efficacy on it, That it *counts all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*. It new-makes our views of every thing; what stood in competition with Christ is the particular object of hatred; what may tend to draw away from him, is looked upon with jealousy. Common gifts, though shining, are despised in comparison of him; the exercise of these is accounted a poor recompense for the want of Christ's presence in duty. Duties themselves, abstract from him, are counted nothing. The poor soul, perhaps, despises in itself what the world admires in it. *In a word*, Every thing is valued in proportion to its relation to Christ—its connection with duty to him, and faith in him: Self-righteousness disappears. Such is the spirit of a Christian, in proportion as the light shines in him. O how sweet is the prevalence of it! How happy the hour, when a present God makes his people to feel these things to be realities!—Thus far we have endeavoured to point out to you, some of these instances wherein the efficacy of Divine illumination appears in the heart. The nature of my design does not allow me to add many more that might be mentioned. We now, therefore, proceed to lay before you, in the

THIRD place, on this head, *Some of the distinguishing marks of that illumination which is of a saving kind, and reaches to the heart; in opposition to that which is of a common kind, and rests in the head.* It is evident, from sad experience, that Satan often, as his last shift, turns himself into an angel of light: God, for wise and holy ends, permits him to do so; and hence many stumble and fall—hence many go to the pit with a lie in their right hand: It is necessary that means be used for awakening such. On the other hand, as God's people know full well the danger of being imposed on, they often suspect even God's work on their souls. We are not to imagine the difference cannot be known: God's work is essentially different from every thing else—is known by its effects; and rules are laid down for guiding us in this matter. I shall therefore mention some of these, confining myself chiefly to such as arise from the nature of the work itself; referring you also, to what has been said already to the same purpose, immediately above. In the

FIRST place, That illumination which is saving, and of the genuine kind, may be known by its leading the soul to a deep self-abasement and abhorrence: That which is of a common kind does the contrary. God's design is to lay us low in our own eyes; he discovers himself that we may be confounded, and never open our mouth any more. That light, therefore, which feeds pride, is not of God's kindling; but is an encompassing ourselves about with our own sparks: Far different is the case of God's people, Job xlii. 6. John, when he saw Christ, or the Son of man, fell at his feet as dead, Rev. i. 17. A sight of *Christ* in his *glory* overwhelms the soul under a sense of its own unworthiness

ness—"What am I, O Lord!" It represents sin in its blackest shape—IT gives a view of unbelief, shocking to the soul; it is breaking the bands of such a Redeemer—it is wounding him again, and again; his ceasing in that moment to strike the blow of justice, overwhelms yet further: Hence, looking to him whom we have pierced, we mourn—*We smite on our breast when we turn, and are instructed*, Jer. xxxi. 19. If such has been the effect with you, then the work is of God. Were it possible, as it is not, for Satan to do this, it would be a pulling down his house with his own hands. Much of the difference between true and false grace will be found to lie hereabouts. In the

SECOND place, That illumination and teaching which is genuine, leads to ascribe the whole glory of the work of salvation to God. When the Spirit comes, he comes to glorify Christ to the soul—to set on high his Person and Mediatorial office; this Satan never does, nor any but the Spirit of Christ. Now, Divine Light is thus to be distinguished: Sinners will pretend to believe their salvation is wholly of God, and often those least concerned about salvation do so; but the practical, clear, satisfying views of this matter are a different thing. God lets his people see the spring of mercy in him—the Spirit, whereby they are sanctified, in Christ; and the security they have against a deceitful heart, to be in him; the security for steadfastness, and against apostacy, to be in him. *In a word*, The preparatory work empties the soul, and shews it to be utterly dead: The saving work brings a perfect and compleat cure, in a full salvation. Now, dealing with God, on this view of matters, never goes further than pretence with hypocrites; they never have

have a full view of their need of Christ, nor of the absolute suitableness of his grace, as accommodated to a wholly-lost sinner.

THIRDLY, Saving illumination is received from the word, not as man's word, but as God's; then has the gospel its proper effect—then has faith its true foundation. Saving faith is founded on a Divine Testimony—it is the answer of the heart to the perceived and understood voice of heaven. I pity those who imagine it an easy matter to perceive this; (it is certain the most part of professors believe no such thing) they seek not God's voice; they know it not, nor do they ever miss it. Christians deal with heaven at another rate; in them the Spirit gives a testimony to the *word*—makes it to be felt as God's; it lays hold of the soul; and, as God's, they venture on it—as faithfulness is seen in it: Hence arises their security; hence they know it is no imagination they trust—no cunningly devised fable whereon they place their hope; they know that here is the treasure to be received from God's own hands. Dearest thou thus in reality, O man! Flesh and blood hath not taught thee, but the Eternal God himself! In the

FOURTH place, Saving illumination is distinguished from that which is common, in that it rests not in a general discovery of Divine Truth, but brings it home to the soul in particular. This is to be extended to all Divine teaching in general, and belongs to the discovery of Christ in particular: General views of the gospel do no good—such as give us an idea of a thing excellent in itself, but not leading to any particular concern therein. Many know much of Christ, as wicked men shall do hereafter—see him, but not nigh: But when the *Spirit* comes it is otherwise; HE speaks

as men cannot; HE takes the word of poor worms like yourselves, and sends it home to you; and reveals Christ, as offered of God *for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and compleat redemption*; to you, man, HE brings the salvation near, even into thy very heart. Hence the Christian rejoices as one who has found great spoil: This is an universal rule in the Spirit's teaching—HE testifies to THEE.

FIFTHLY, Saving illumination is to be particularly tried by its rendering the soul satisfied to venture its all on God's Covenant, as a sure foundation—they that know will trust; let the soul be in jeopardy, yet it will venture here—let the thunder of Sinai be ever so loud—let it be in the view of eternity, when it dares not trifle; yet, on a God in Christ, as manifested in the covenant, it can settle; let it see itself lost to the uttermost, and sin compassing it about; yet it can rest on the almighty arm of Jehovah, like a weary traveller who has, at last, found his home. Hypocrites pretend to do this, but it is in fair weather, or for form and compliment; they speak fair, because they think they have another rock though this fail. Not so the saints. “Not so, my soul, O Lord; for *into thy hands I commit my spirit for ever.*” Amen.

S E R M O N XI.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

EVERY view we have of the religion of Jesus Christ, under the direction of the Spirit, shews it to have a glory that excelleth. The design is worthy of God, even the manifestation of his perfections, not only in themselves, but in their exercise—bringing back sinners to their Master—their happiness. All the parts of this religion are wonderful: The Lord Christ introduced it with miracles: The Spirit carries it on (if I may so speak) by a continued miracle. The Wisdom of God raises monuments of glory from the ruins of our apostate nature. The Father hath wrought, and hitherto works: The Son of God is incarnate—teaches, dies, rises, and reigns: The Spirit is sent—works in, and leads the soul to glory. Surely we may begin our admiration ere we go to heaven, though then only will it be in its highest exercise. We have already, as God has enabled, taken occasion to teach the analogy between God's work in the first and second creations—the nature and circumstances of the work of illumination, reaching the heart. And we proceed now to what was proposed, in the

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THIRD place, as the next general head, *To represent and illustrate the end and design of the Spirit's illumination; namely, To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God—and, To shew what knowledge of it is hereby produced.* Our Lord declares it to be *life eternal to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent*; it is the foundation of all practical religion—of all our faith, prayers, and hopes. Here I shall, *1st*, Offer some preliminary observations, to open the subject in general. *2^{dly}*, Shew what of the glory of God is manifested, and what views of it are given; confining myself, as much as possible, to what is directly practical.

FIRST, then, Observe, That man is naturally ignorant of God, as to all the ends of salvation. The light of nature, indeed, shews that there is a God. The invisible things of his perfections are, in one sense, seen by the things that he has made: This is the foundation of natural religion. But how to deal with God under a load of guilt, wherewithal to come before him, &c. that we know not till God reveal it; therefore the Apostle declares, That, as to saving purposes, *we are without God in the world.* I speak not only of these who never heard the gospel, but of ALL MEN in a natural state: Every sinner is a practical atheist—he says in his heart, *There is no God*; or, That he is such an one as himself. The things that belong to our peace are hid from the wise and prudent; the natural man perceives them not, though set before him—he feels them not, he despises them as cunning fables: *No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.* Just as with Christ in the days of his flesh—his countrymen had an external knowledge of him; but his disciples alone

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saw his glory. Think not that you, finners, are better than those; that you would have treated Christ better. Our Lord declares, That the blood of the prophets would be required at the hands of those who garnished their tombs. The knowledge of God's people is of a nature entirely different from yours. When you turn over a new leaf you will find God another God than ever you thought, whether your eyes are opened here or hereafter. But,

SECONDLY, Observe, That the design of the gospel is to bring us acquainted with God; not only as he is in himself, but what he is in respect to us, in order to our dealing with him. The *Only Begotten*, who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him—HE proclaims his awful justice—HE denounces terrors to you, impenitent finners—HE proclaims himself also the Lord merciful and gracious—HE opens the stores of his love—HE says, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*—HE promises the Spirit, for leading and teaching—HE makes this word a ministration of the Spirit; while finners stand around, and see nothing, Stephen beholds the glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand—HE sends us to gather you to himself; Christ, the great Shepherd, had a commission to do so—HE empowers us to call you in his name—*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of Man lifted up*, that weary heavy laden souls may look; that you, sinner, may see sin in its worst shape—behold Jesus dying under the load! that you may look, and see God well pleased in his Anointed. Ah! then, what shall become of thee! Shall I mention this without calling you—Poor sinner, whose soul is almost extinct, look here, and be saved! God testifies that there is healing

healing virtue here. God's appointment made the brazen serpent a mean of cure to the wounded Israelites. His appointment makes, certifies, and warrants his Christ to be a physician to thee—O! cast as it were a dying look thither, and thou shalt live. Behold, the Lord Christ is lifted up! God declares, and we declare in his name, the remission of sins through him: Heaven warrants the pardon—God's seal is set to it—Christ's Spirit witnesses it. Art thou wounded to death? Dost thou every day—dost thou this day feel the poison working in thy soul? Thus saith the Lord Christ, I speak in righteousness, mighty to save—Oh look! Or, Are your hearts sealed up? Do you despise him in your hearts! Have you come hither to laugh at him to his face! Oh! you that have looked before, look hither again and be lightened. O sin-burdened Soul, whoever thou art, look here! O come to the fellowship of the saints! Oh look, and receive the treasure from a liberal hand!—When speaking of this, my Brethren, one is ready to think, Who will not look! But it is fit the work be entirely in God's hand—let him have the glory of it. But, saith the renewed soul, thither will I look, and be saved.

THIRDLY, I observe, That there is an inexpressible sweetness and beauty in the gospel discovery of a God in Christ: It overpowers the soul, and fills it, so as it wants no more—*Let thy servant depart in peace, mine eyes have seen thy Salvation.* Then are all doubts removed; and the glory of the Lord shining, scatters his enemies. Hence Moses prays for it, *Exod. xxxiii. 18. I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.* And this is the chief thing David desires, *Psal. xxvii. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days*

of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. God seen in Christ, is seen looking with complacency on the returning prodigal, welcoming him back to his Father's house—wrapping him around with the arm of his omnipotence, to hinder his enemies from ever getting the dominion over him. Oh, that ye knew what is the gift of God! Alas! we are but babes in this matter. Come and see, is that which alone can or will satisfy us; were we breathing after the discovery, surely the time were indeed near. Oh! believe it, the one half is not told you! Come, sinner, and Christ will make thee feel more in one hour than thou canst ever tell! Cry—Awake, O north wind! Cry—Turn me, and I shall be turned.

FOURTHLY, Observe, That a Divine manifestation of the glory of God is the foundation of true believing. A sinner comes, indeed, to an unseen Christ, and blessed are they that do so; but he comes on God's testimony. *Mark*—I do not mean that sense is, or is to be the foundation of faith. I speak of a discovery made unto faith in and by the word. Faith is the soul's going out to an unknown land, but on God's call and report; hence the prodigal says, there is bread in my Father's house; therefore I will arise. Sinners sit still on one of these accounts, Either they care not about salvation—have not spent their all—say no evil shall come nigh me—heaven is not worth striving for—God is a portion not worth having, &c.; or, Like the unbelieving lord, when the prophet promised plenty, say, How can these things be?—How shall this man give us his flesh to eat!—God cannot be in earnest! Hence their hearts sink like a stone—they charge heaven foolishly; concerning these the sentence is awful—*Thou shalt*

shalt see it, but not eat thereof—SEE IT, BUT NOT NIGH, &c. On the other hand, They who believe to the saving of the soul hear the report—take it on God's warrant—see the glory of God manifested in Christ; and therefore Come, Look, and are Saved. In the

FIFTH place, Observe, That the sovereignty and grace of God, and the glory of the mediation of Christ, are manifested in the discovery of God's glory to a sinner. Therefore, our Lord offered that memorable act of praise for it, Mat. xi. 25.—HE rejoiced in spirit. When the scales fall off from the sinner's eyes, Jesus takes part with him in the joy; HE then sees the travail of his soul—a lost sheep returning—the power of HIS Spirit prevailing—HIS prayer and intercession answered—HIS Father's design made good; and his new creation rising under his hands. It is a poor blind sinner, a babe; one that seemed to stand at the greatest distance: Therefore, Divine sovereignty is glorified, and a triumph prepared for himself to all eternity. Poor saint! Dost thou not rejoice in spirit with him? Dost thou not offer a secret act of praise to God for the same reason? Does it not quicken thy desire, and add wings to thy faith? Are you not ambitious to have thy own soul the altar from which the incense shall ascend? Oh, the way is opened by Christ! Here is a physician to open thine eyes, one sent of God for this purpose. Oh, I have much work to give thee!—"Take it, and be glorified in it, "O Jesus!"

SIXTHLY, Observe, That the knowledge of the glory of God is the light wherein the saints now walk by faith, and hereafter shall walk by sight. The glory of God is that which enlightens the temple below,
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and endears the ordinances—It is the glory of God shining in, and on the promise that enlightens it, and makes it sweet—It is seeing the love of Christ, the mercy of God, the eternal faithfulness of Jehovah, stamp on, and wrought into the Covenant that makes it all their salvation, and all their desire. In heaven, it is the full manifestation of God's glory that fills them with joy for ever: The glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; there they perceive it in another manner: God unveils himself—as much of himself as they can behold: Christ leads them in the path of life. Now it is as the dawning of the day: There, as the sun shining in his strength.—*May the day break, and the shadows flee away.*

SECONDLY, *We come to shew what of the glory of God is manifested to the soul by the Spirit, and what views thereof are given.* Here observe, That this manifestation is not equally clear to all, nor equally clear at different times; it is far from being made all at once. Yea, we are daily needing to have the same lessons repeated over and over again. Now, the glory of God signifies the superlative excellency of his nature: His perfections and attributes are his glory: The works of his hands are therefore said to declare his glory, as they manifest his Eternal Power and Godhead—his Wisdom and Goodness: His word declares his glory; as it more fully sets forth these perfections in their exercise. The Lord Christ (as shall be shewn more fully afterwards) is said to be the brightness of his glory, in regard that all his perfections are substantially expressed in him; being in the form and essence of God. As we shall have occasion to speak of the medium, wherein it is manifested, afterwards,

terwards, let us at present, Consider the glory of his perfections themselves; and let it be taken along, that I speak of them, (as indeed the Spirit reveals them) in their exercise towards us to whom the discovery is made. In the

FIRST place, (shortly) The glory of the *Divine Sovereignty* is manifested to the soul. Often the Psalmist expresses his views of this—praising God as reigning for ever—as doing what pleased him in heaven and earth, and all deep places; HIS will and pleasure is the source of all: HE owes no man ought; HE discovers this, to humble the pride of all created glory. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XII.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ is a great mystery; even common apprehensions of it shew it to be so: But none know the truth so well as these that are taught of God; not only are new things discovered, but plain, fundamental truths taught over again in another manner than before. The things of God are only known through the Spirit; it is HIS glory to reveal them; it is the glory of the gospel to be the mean of this revelation; and it is the blessedness of saints to receive it. We have already given some preliminary observations on this subject. We proposed, *2dly*, To shew what of the glory of God is manifested by the Spirit, and what views thereof are given. On which I add, in the

SECOND place, That the glory of God, in his *mercy*, is, by the Spirit, manifested to the soul. The mercy of God is wrought into every part of the Covenant; it is one of the secrets thereof that is manifested. Moses asked a view of his glory, *Exod. xxxiii. 18.* God told him he would answer him by proclaiming his name, the first article whereof is, **THE LORD GOD MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS**; so it is proclaimed in the ears of an humbled sinner, in a day of the Lord's mercy
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to him. All men pretend to believe that God is *merciful*, and to ground their hopes hereon—they have heard it ; Christians have said it is so. They take up their superficial belief of it easily, and without trouble—they have said it so often, that they think they believe it indeed. But how little they know of the matter, let the following observations, drawn from the life, shew :

FIRST, If God, in a day of power, awaken their souls to reflection, and set their sins in the light of their countenance, then, whatever general notions they may retain of the matter, they find it hard to see how mercy can take place to them ; their pretended faith is then tried, and stands them in little stead : If they believe at all, it is as the devils, who believe and tremble—then they know that their hearfay goes a small length. If God shews his salvation, they find it another matter than they apprehended.

SECONDLY, View many a man at the hour of death, when trifling is at an end, and see what he thinks of the matter : Tell him God is *merciful*, he says he knows it ; tell him there is forgiveness, he owns it to be true—Yet often either goes off with a lie in his right-hand, or with despair in his lips ; if insensible, he professes he believes it—yet often knows not whereof he affirms ; if awakened, he refuses to be comforted. Many particulars might be enumerated to illustrate this, which I forbear. Only saints themselves know the difference there is in viewing this matter in man's light and in God's ; they know what it is to have their mouth filled with arguments, by the teaching of the Spirit, and what it is to have it restrained. Now, the view of it given by the Spirit, in the face

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of Christ, may be comprehended in the following particulars :

1st, In a manifestation of its greatness and abundance. See how Daniel expresses it, under the direction of the Spirit—*To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him*, Dan. ix. 9. Sinners, viewing the matter, think God such a one as themselves—forgetting sin, because they forget it, and think it no great matter: Hence they change their views of him, when they change their views of sin—they think it, perhaps, too great to be forgiven; therefore, when God discovers his grace, in a gospel-light, he says, *My ways, and my thoughts, are not as yours—My mercy shall be built up for ever*. Who knows what a treasure is hid here!—Greater than eye hath seen indeed! God's thoughts are like himself, and his mercy worthy of himself—mercy indeed infinite—mercy flowing out in multiplying to pardon—*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*, Isa. lv. 7. Then it is seen mercy adapted to our misery; then God reasons, and it appears, that though sin be like *scarlet*, it shall become as *wool*, Isa. i. 18. Thus it is seen as in the face of Christ, as shall be shewn afterwards—seen in his person, in his sufferings and grace, in the accomplishing of the promise made about sending him, and giving him as a covenant to the people—O glorious sight, and satisfying to the soul!

2^{dly}, The glory of the Divine mercy is manifested in the freedom of it—it is mercy without money, and without price; herein is its suitableness to the sinner's case

case manifested; he is brought low—dead that he may live; he has nothing to purchase withal, and comes a beggar; his thoughts of God, in a natural estate, made him either trifle with God, or fly away from him, and say, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man; or come to him, vainly, with a price in his hand. But God will empty us, That he who glories may glory in the Lord; they alone who have felt, can tell what joy and rest it gives to see God dealing with us in this way—the blessing coming from his own hand—the pardon and mercy spoken by the mouth of the Lord who cannot lie—given on the terms whereon alone the sinner can be the better for it; he receives it as a condemned man would do a reprieve; he falls down at God's footstool—he is well pleased with his terms—he asks, and desires no more. Speaking of this, my Dear Brethren, is one thing, and dealing with heaven this way another.

3dly, The glory of God, in his mercy, is manifested to the soul by a discovery of the end wherefore it is exerted—*Even for his own name's sake*; that is, For the manifestation of his own honour. The importance of this, may be learned from the frequent discoveries God makes of it—*I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*, Isa. xliii. 25. *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy names sake—Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel*, Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32. In all these, the gospel discovery of mercy, as applied to the sinner, sets it on God himself, as its foundation; leads our faith out of our-

selves—fixes it on him—represents the manifestations of the Divine Glory, as wrought into the plan of our redemption; hereby an eternal, and immoveable, security is laid for our hope of happiness; neither height of provocation, nor depth of misery can shake it. Here God is seen acting worthy of himself, and like himself: The bar is taken out of the way that we had chiefly to fear—even the dignity and glory of the Divine nature, threatening death to sinners. O the height and depth of Divine Love! God has declared, that *Mercy shall be built up for ever*; here is the foundation laid, and on himself: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this shall not sink; and thou, Christian, who art taken into the building, shall never sink. Hence, even from God's name sake, flow these acts of it that have already passed before our eyes—Christ promised, given, incarnate, dying, and offered to thee; this lays open the bottom of the matter—Angels look down with wonder! Hence flows the amazing height of the building of mercy—reaching to the heavens—raising thee, poor sinful dust, thither; raising, I may say, to an infinite height, because the effects of it are eternal! Thus God manifests the mystery and secret of the Covenant of mercy: It is pleasant to speak of this; but, Oh! if by faith we have been let into it, what is it then! Hast thou ever seen it, when brought even to God's seat, in prayer or otherwise? Hast thou been enabled, by the Holy Ghost, to talk to him of it?—Sure thy heart was then full—thy cup run over; it is but a glance of this we have now; the day of consummation shall fully declare it. But, Oh! Mercy, for God's name sake, is suitable to a poor sinner. Try, my brethren, the force of it, plead on it; it will fill your desires,

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and will bring the only abiding and sure answer to the challenges of the heart.

4thly, I shall observe shortly, (because this will be more fully discussed, hereafter) That the Glory of God, in his mercy, is manifested, as it is seen to flow to the soul through the blood of Christ: There is no remission without shedding of blood; and no right view of this mercy, but as connected with the shedding of blood. The whole gospel manifests this truth, namely, That in this way is mercy exerted. Great must be the mercy that gives such a ransom; great must be the mercy of which this is the price! It must be mercy to sinners indeed, else why coming in this manner? It must extend to the chief of sinners; for what stains cannot this blood (in which it flows) wash out?—It is mercy flowing to sinners of mankind; being expressed through HIM who was *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*. In the

5th and last place, The glory of the Divine Mercy is manifested, as coming, in the way of offer, to the sinner himself. It is not only shewn in its native glory and its seat, but also in its stream—good will to men; it is manifested, as in a promise—*My salvation* (saith the Lord) *is near, and my righteousness to be revealed*; in an offer, particularly respecting thee, poor condemned man, whose guilt is like crimson—the fountain is open and unsealed: The house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem are called. Yea, mercy is seen following the wretched outcast to the brink of hell!—to the depths of death; and God, in Christ, warranting the application thereof!

IN these lights does every babe in Christ, more or less, view the matter: Perhaps, indeed, he is not able
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to tell it distinctly; it is enough if we can do it to God. Often does the Psalmist carry it on his heart—*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions*, Psal. li. 11. And, Psal. xl. 11, &c. *With-hold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*—*Finally*, Let me call you to the fellowship of this grace. Oh! be persuaded, or compelled to come in; come hither, and let us lay down our burdens—confess our guilt—feed our faith, and add fuel to the flame of love.—Into these hands let us commit our spirits for now, and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

THE Glory of all the Divine Perfections is wonderfully manifested in the salvation of sinners (hence the work of salvation appears worthy of God) —all of them conspire harmoniously in bringing about the work; so that not only the glory of each, but of the whole in conjunction is declared. The view of this is the chief support of our faith, and consequently is connected with every part of the Christian life. Ignorance of God is one of the main springs of our misery. Hence wicked men, if they do not see their misery, despise God; if they feel their smart, they are terrified at him, or expect no good from him. A Christian, on the other hand, is guided by other views; hence holy boldness is mixed and tempered with self-loathing and awful reverence: If we are not enabled to deal with God on gospel views of his glory, we only offer an idol-worship, as the Athenians did, to an unknown god. This may serve to alarm many, proud of their prayers, &c. and saying, *What lack I yet?* This shews the necessity of a discovery of the Divine Glory spoke of in the text, and how important the doctrine is. I have shewn how the glory of God, in his
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mercy, is manifested ; and what views of it are given, I observe, in the

THIRD place, That the glory of God, in his *justice*, is manifested to the soul. Divine Justice is that whereby he gives rational creatures their due : Hence sinners receive eternal misery—the wages of sin ; and saints the gift of grace, purchased for them by Christ. Now, in the exercise of this God is glorified ; therefore he is said to *love righteousness*, Psal. xlv. 7. Now, in this attribute we are particularly interested—God is Judge of all the earth. Every one of us must appear before him ; we are assured that he will *render to every one according to his works* : There is no salvation in opposition to his justice. In judging and punishing sin, HE acts as the moral governor of the world ; so that it is unworthy of him, and contrary to his nature, to let sin pass unpunished : Therefore, in order to know how we are to deal with God, he declares his justice ; because, till once we see how this may have its due, there is no possibility of having our salvation placed on a sure bottom ; otherwise, it will be like the flaming sword waving over the gate of Paradise. Now the view of it given to the soul, by the Spirit, may be taken in these particulars :

1st, The Glory of Divine Justice is manifested to the soul in its awfulness and purity. It is seen acting in a consistency with the most perfect holiness ; far from giving encouragement to the least sin—excluding all uncleanness from the Divine presence ; this fills the soul with profound reverence to God : I am therefore troubled at HIS presence—when I consider, I am afraid of HIM, says Job. The punishment of fallen angels shews this truth : The exclusion of our first parents from paradise and the favour of God,

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shews it. The exacting the satisfaction from our Surety, the Lord Christ, crowns the evidence—God's sword awaking against him who was his fellow—not sparing his own Son. The view of Christ crucified *thus*, fills the soul not only with amazing apprehensions of Divine Grace, but with a religious awe of the severity of his Justice. Hence the soul cries out, with Habakkuck, *When I heard, my belly trembled, &c.*; this leads the soul to deal with God on another footing than heretofore. Alas! if matters are so, what are my prayers, tears, &c.? They are not sufficient for a burnt-offering; deep guilt inlaid in my soul, makes them all rejected: This, also, thro' grace, has a happy influence to recommend the Lord Christ; it shews, That HE is the only way; it further shews, That God certainly designs to save poor souls through HIM; since in him the awful purity of justice is so much glorified. You see, then, that the Christian does not set out on a slight view of God's justice—he counts the cost of salvation, and weighs the offers of grace in God's balance.

2dly, God's Justice is manifested in its satisfaction, consistence, and harmony with mercy. Hence the view of it not only inspires the soul with awe and reverence, but also with trust and hope. Great as it is, it fills not the soul with horror and absolute despair, but with holy fear and dread. The poor sinner has been long tossed with fears—the curse of a broken law sounding in his ears, quenching the prayer, as it were, in his very lips; but God calls him from Sinai to Mount Zion, to a throne of grace—to view, in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain; HE manifests himself, as laying the iniquities of us all upon Christ—on Christ the righteous: Christ bearing

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the load, dying under it, saying—Take me, and let these go free: Christ rising again, victorious and triumphant, as an evidence that the price was fully paid: God receiving the Mediator to his right-hand, and giving him a name *above every name*, as an evidence that he was fully glorified in what he had done. *Finally*, God makes him see himself called to the fellowship of Christ Jesus. As an infinite worth was in his precious blood, so thou, sinner, art called to claim and receive the virtue of it for thyself. Faith seeing this, and perceiving the voice and finger of God in it, the burden falls off; even as the Israelites, looking to the brazen serpent, were cured: This removes, as it were, the great guilt, and opens a free vent for mercy; so that, through Christ, both are jointly glorified. This leads me to observe,

3dly, That, in this view, the justice of God is seen tending towards, and ascertaining the salvation of the believing soul. Even as it was a just and righteous thing with God to raise his Son from the dead; even so it is a righteous thing to save his people through him. Christ prayed for his glorification from the righteous Father; he knew that it was an act of justice, that he should be glorified. On the same footing he prays, *That these given him, might be with him to behold his glory*. To those who believe not, this is tasteless; but, to a believer it is life from the dead, to see righteousness declared in the remission of sin; it makes the salvation of God appear worthy of him to give—*worthy of all acceptance* from us: A sure method—God declaring in the gospel, That he is willing his righteousness be glorified in us; this crowns the security; this is a part of his name wherein he delights.—*For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;*
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his countenance doth behold the upright, Psal. xi. 7. A just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me, Isa. xlv. 21.

4thly, Another part of the Divine Glory manifested to the soul is, *God's unchangeable and eternal faithfulness*. This is a part of his name wherein he delights—*I am the Lord who changeth not*. Under this character he is often praised by the saints—*I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name, Psal. cxxxviii. 2.* All his perfections are exercised in the salvation of sinners; but it is his *faithfulness* that secures the exercise of them to us: Hence it is called, by a proper figure, *The girdle of his loins*—Securing and binding, by a debt of grace, mercy to pardon—power to save—wisdom to direct us in the way. Therefore the faithfulness of God is that which may, with the greatest propriety, be said to be the immediate object of the faith of God's elect. A trust in this faithfulness is therefore said, directly, to have constituted the faith of Sarah—*She judged him faithful who had promised, Heb. xi. 11.*; and the nature of unbelief is expressly said to be making God a liar—denying him the glory that is due to his faithful name. This might be illustrated by many instances, which will, perhaps, arise in your meditations, while we endeavour to point out the views under which this faithfulness is presented, and the discoveries that are made of it by the Spirit of God. In the

FIRST place, The Glory of the Divine Faithfulness is manifested in its unchangeableness and constancy. In its nature it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; No distance of time can make a promise lose

its virtue, or make God forget that it was made. We are poor fickle creatures! We think the efficacy of the precious promises lost, when we lose the frame we had when viewing them: But a Christian knows that a frame is not to be depended on; if his security ebb'd and flow'd with it, all would be lost: Therefore it must have a deeper foundation, that the promise may be sure to the seed. Now, this is in God's unchangeable nature and will—He knows all his works from the beginning. What he promised, he promised upon a certain and unerring view of things; he even knew before-hand all the lets and bars that were to come in the way; and ordered them for his own glory: Therefore no reason of changeableness can ever happen in him—*He is of one mind, and who can turn him?* Look, my Brethren, and you will see that an apprehension of God contrary to this, and judging him such an one as ourselves, is at the bottom of all our unbelief. But when faith has got on this rock—*The unchangeable faithfulness of God*, it can securely defy all storms whatever. In the

SECOND place, The faithfulness of God is manifested by the Spirit, as wrought into the whole frame of the covenant in general, and into every promise of it in particular. Hear the account the Lord Christ gives of himself—*I am he that speak in righteousness, mighty to save*, Isa. lxiii. 1. Eternal righteousness is in all thy testimonies, says the Psalmist. The Covenant of Mercy has this wrought into it to give it security; therefore the souls embarked here shall never perish: Faithfulness is seen in it, securing the blessing from God—our steadfastness—suitable provision for our souls, and grace to help in time of need: Faithfulness is seen securing this hold of the sinner, that he may never

ver be plucked out of God's hand; and the sinner's hold of God, that he shall never totally leave him. Eternal, unchangeable, faithfulness is seen wrought into the offer and call of the gospel—*God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*, 1 Cor. i. 9. Hence the sinner may venture on it—Even as Abraham followed God's call to an unknown land which he was to inherit: The same Eternal Faithfulness is seen to be wrought into every particular promise; so that the soul can plead it in faith, and bring it with boldness into God's presence, putting him in remembrance of his word. In the

THIRD place, I observe, That the faithfulness of God is manifested, as prevailing over every obstacle seeming to be thrown in the way of it. Low ideas of Divine Power and Grace make us doubt every moment: Feeling much guilt and deadness in ourselves, makes us form these low and unworthy thoughts. We say, *Can these dry bones live, when they are scattered about the grave's mouth?* Though Jesus say, *I am the resurrection and the life*, our unbelieving thoughts recur—"Lord we have been so long dead, "and in the grave." Even so in every other instance, as well as of spiritual deadness, do our unbelieving hearts suggest seeming difficulties. "Prayers cannot "be answered, because long forgot," say we. "Sin "cannot be pardoned, because too deep. I cannot be- "long to God, because the distance is so great, &c." Now, the Glory of the Divine Faithfulness, in the promise, is to prevail here—Said I not if thou would believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God: Therefore God shews, *That he is not man that he should lie,*
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nor the son of man that he should repent; that his thoughts are above ours; that he levels mountains, and fills up valleys, when he comes to bless his people; and thus faith, on this discovery, triumphs, viewing its foundation to be a God in Christ—it takes all its measures from this. Even as Abraham, with respect to the promised seed, considered not his body almost dead; he passed by this natural difficulty, it had no effect, or influence on his faith; he rested on the naked arm of Jehovah; improbability, length of time intervening betwixt the first promising and accomplishment; seasons when, perhaps, the blessing was expected had gone over; none of these staggered his faith—You know the event. May God give all of us spiritual wisdom, to read here a lesson for our example, that we may go and do likewise. In the

FOURTH place, The faithfulness of God is manifested, as particularly interested to make good things unseen. Much of our treasure is unseen; it lies in a distant land, beyond the grave—the crown and palm—the complete deliverance from sin—the beholding God's face for ever—the total and eternal absence of sorrow and sighing; these are now the objects of faith, and are only seen in a promise: This promise derives all its certainty from God; his faithfulness is interposed about it. Now, with respect to him, past, present, and to come, are equally certain—a thousand years are as a moment intervening. Therefore the promise, taken in faith from himself, makes them present, as it were, to faith. Moses triumphs over a crown, and the pleasures of sin, as if the recompence of reward were already present. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X I V .

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

NOTHING is of greater importance than a serious and frequent trial of our hearts—than an examination of their exercises: There is much false grace, sometimes more shining, and sometimes less. Particularly should we try our faith—what are its exercises, and what is its foundation: True faith is distinguished from false, among other things, by the grounds of it—It is founded on a lively discovery of God to the heart, as he is in Christ. We had need, therefore, to try what our views are, lest we be building on a sandy foundation. Happy he who is right led in this matter. We have discoursed of the discoveries of the glory of God made to the heart, in various instances—We have shewn, in some measure, how his faithfulness is manifested; and, on this particular, we may add, in the

Fifth place, That the Glory of the Divine Faithfulness appears to the soul, as already manifested, in fulfilling many of the promises; all of them depending on one another; all of them having the same security, even the Divine Faithfulness; all of them illustrating one another—The whole of the dispensation of grace has been conducted by a chain of promises.

mises. Now, it is impossible for the foundation of the faith of God's Elect to be made stronger, because it is unchangeable faithfulness: But as, unto our view, it is much strengthened by the evidence of promises performed—these bring the matter near, and manifest, That God's word, on which we are called to hope, is no cunningly devised fable, in many instances the circumstances are so parallel, that present difficulties are seen to have been overcome in past instances. Thus the coming and incarnation of Christ was once the matter of promise only; all the rest depend on this, and are as branches from it; it was promised early; the faith of the Patriarchs was founded on that and the succeeding promises: Many difficulties seemed to come in its way—Abraham and Sarah, from whom Christ was to descend, were old: Afterwards the Israelites were oppressed: At last the Family of David were almost quite eclipsed—All seemed to work against the great promise; but God remembered his Covenant. In the midst of a sinful people, Christ arose as a light in a dark place: Here was faithfulness magnified!—That Faithfulness whereon depends thy hope, thy pardon, thy present and future acceptance. This throws a Divine Light on every promise—teaches Christians to triumph and rejoice in hope, and to conclude well concerning all the rest—*I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.—Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. 7.*—So Christians may improve their own experiences of past mercy. God, perhaps, has disappointed thee

thee in the way and manner of his dealing, in performing his word; but yet has, in his own way, performed it. Let this be suitably improved. I proceed now to observe, in the

Fifth place, That the Glory of God in his *Holiness*, is manifested to the soul by the Holy Ghost. This is one of the peculiar excellencies of the Divine nature—it is that wherein God delights, and rejoices; that whereby he swears, and for which the angels and saints praise him. The view of this fills the saints with a holy fear and veneration of him; it sheds a lustre over all his other perfections, so as to make the view delightful. Now, then, none can see this aright but enlightened souls, and to them it is manifested in the following manner:

1st, In its excellent beauty and loveliness. Holiness has a loveliness in it that would delight our hearts, if they were not so thoroughly depraved; but sin is wrought so deep into our hearts, that we see no beauty in it—rather is it the object of wicked mens aversion: A sore eye cannot bear the light. The carnal mind is even enmity against it, and sees nothing in it but what is a reproach to itself. Christians, on the other hand, are made to perceive it as the most lovely object; they behold it in God in the greatest perfection; they love him for it, and lament that they are not more like him whose image it is.

2^{dly}, The Glory of the Divine Holiness is manifested, as stamped and impressed on all his commandments, and dispensations to the children of men; particularly in the terms of the New Covenant, Psal. cxlv. 17. and cv. 42.

3^{dly}, The Glory of God's Holiness is manifested, as being the pattern after which the Divine Image is to be

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formed in our souls by the Holy Ghost, Eph. iv. 24. 2 Cor. iii. 18. &c. We proceed to observe, in the

SIXTH place, That the Glory of God, in his *Wisdom*, is manifested to the soul.

1st, As a great depth to be adored and admired for ever, Rom. xi. 33.

2^{dly}, As adapting the matter, the bond, and the offer of the Covenant to the circumstances of poor sinners; himself glorified; full security; full provision; respect to our deadness; God himself saving; promise through Christ; bond in him; offer brought low, and all to his glory; his design so laid that it cannot miscarry.

3^{dly}, As fitted to bring poor blind souls to God, and guide them through a maze of temptations. Christ, the Wisdom of God, is made to us *wisdom*, &c.

4^{thly}, As ordering all events, and making them concur in promoting his glory and their good, Rom. viii. 28.

I N F E R E N C E S.

FIRST, See the wretched degeneracy of our natures, so little affected with this glory.

SECONDLY, Let us try our love to God, by examining whether or not it is directed to such an object.

THIRDLY, Let us pray with Moses—*I beseech thee, shew me thy glory*, Exod. xxxiii. 18.

SERMON XV.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

ONE of the chief and greatest designs of the gospel is, To set before you the glory of God's Anointed. One of his great designs in bringing sinners to himself is, To set a crown of glory on his head. Hence it hath pleased the Father, that *all fulness should dwell in him*—the treasures of grace, of wisdom, and knowledge. He hath connected all our blessedness with him; so that he should be glorified in every part of it. This is one of the principles of the life of faith—this should always lead us to a direct dealing with the Lord Christ. If a man lack pardon, grace, strength, and wisdom, let him ask it of God. The text leads to consider this matter: When a great blessing is bestowed, and a great change wrought, you see it is immediately connected with the person and administration of the Lord Christ. It is, therefore, no gospel, no Spirit of God, that leads us not to God, as in Christ alone, for every blessing. Under Divine assistance, we proceed to the

FOURTH HEAD proposed on this subject; namely, *To shew how the glory of God is manifested to the soul, in the Face of Jesus Christ; together with the*

excellency, and suitableness of this method. By nature we are ignorant of God: All the knowledge we attain of him in a natural way, is, comparatively, darkness—*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,* John i. 18.; HE is the brightness of his glory; HE is essentially so; HE became flesh, partly that we might behold his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father. We, therefore, never see God's glory, so as to be a real encouragement to us under guilt, but seeing it in him—never so as to affect our hearts—influence our faith, or direct to a holy obedience. Now God sets forth his Son, that in Christ we may see HIM by faith, and become acquainted with him; and his glory is said to be revealed in the face of Christ, as it shines to faith,—*1st*, In the constitution of his Person—*2dly*, In his Office and Undertaking—*3dly*, In his Death and Sufferings—*4thly*, In his Resurrection and Glorification—*5thly*, In his Administration of the kingdom of grace. On each of these, I shall speak a little; and then, if need be, shew the necessity and beauty of this method of setting forth the glory of God to the faith of the elect.

FIRST, then, The Glory of God (or his wisdom, power, and grace, through which we are to be saved), is manifested in the face of Christ, by the constitution of his person: Therein he is Immanuel, God with us; Eternal God—true, and very Man: These natures joined in one person for ever! Here is the mystery of godliness!—the source of our hope; a thing that angels desire to look into with wonder and admiration!—a thing whereby the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, represents the Eternal Glory of the Godhead to the souls of the blessed!—full of condescension,

scension, love, and grace ; that which our faith should grasp at in the promise, as its blessed object. Now, how the glory of God, for our salvation, is manifested in this great mystery, observe in these particulars :

1st, This Constitution of the Person of Immanuel illustrates the love, grace, and condescension of God, laying hold of our lost nature. When a sinner's eyes are opened, and his heart feels its vileness in earnest, he can hardly think God will look on such a wretch ; hence, thinks he sees (and indeed does so, when he looks at him out of Christ) God frowning on him ; and therefore adds, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. Words will not persuade a sensible sinner of the contrary. Here is a great difficulty—the sinner cannot come in speaking terms with such a God. When, lo, the clouds of darkness break around him, in the person of Christ, God is seen laying hold of that desperately corrupted nature ! He saw it low and sunk—the devil triumphing over it, sin rampant in it—Could it be lower, and out of hell ! Here, then, is the grace and love of God. In these circumstances he stoops to save us by a surprising step ! A portion of our nature is sanctified, and taken into union with the Divine, in the Person of the Son. Oh ! how high is that love and grace capable of raising us, that stooped so low to find us out ! This must be love that passeth understanding ; it is love streaming forth in good-will to men ; if we have faith's eyes to see it, it will raise our sinking hearts from the depths ; it shews condescension meeting us at hell's gate, as it were. In the

2^d place, The Constitution of the Person of Christ manifests the wisdom and power of God, in laying the foundation of our salvation so deep and sure. The Apostle Paul

Paul cried out in admiration of the depth of God's wisdom. Christ is said to be both the wisdom and the power of God. Sensible finners do not trust they know not what; they need a sure foundation—here it is established. Christ, by the constitution of his person, hath a firm hold of us, (if I may so speak) and gives us a firm hold of him: He carried the human nature, in his person, successfully thro' death: He has raised it up, so that those for whom he undertook it cannot sink; for he took our nature on the elects account—because his children were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part of the same. He will not prove like the first Adam—with him our interest miscarried, here it cannot; for he who hath taken part with us is, *The Mighty God*.

3dly, The Constitution of the Person of Christ illustrates the glory of God, in regard that this constitution makes all the mediatorial acts valid and suitable, both with respect to God and us; this is highly necessary to be considered. What Christ does for us, must be worthy for God to accept, and fit for us to receive—the righteousness that he brings in must be so. Now, his satisfaction and the righteousness brought in by it are accepted of God; because they are the acts of God-man: Here is one great foundation of faith—Oh! improve it. As Man, he is fitted to be a pleader for us, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: As God, he is fitted to appear in the presence of God for us. The same is to be said of every other part of his mediation, which derives a fitness from his person; and thus the glory of God is seen in it.

4thly, The Constitution of the Person of Christ sets before us the glory of God, in regard that hereby the foundation of an everlasting union of our souls to God

God is laid. The Love and Mercy of God is the glory of his nature. One eminent instance of his love is, Coming to us, and making his abode with us; (as our Lord declares) bringing us under a new relation to himself—a relation wherein he will not be ashamed to be called our God; our God by another tenure than he was to Adam in innocence. This relation will be a manifestation of the glory of grace to all eternity; it is the glory of our souls now; it is one of the things a saint, drawing near to God, has in view—*We come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God*, Jer. iii. 22. Faith views it in the Person of Christ, and apprehends it there. Let us look, that we may live. But, in the

SECOND place, I said, The glory of God is manifested in the face of Christ, in regard that it is seen in his office and undertaking—*When sacrifice and offering would not do, Christ said, Lo, I come to do thy will.* God's will was, That of those that were given him he should lose none. His office was to bring us to God, on terms worthy of God, and suited to us. Now, in the whole of this undertaking, and mediatorial office, the glory of God is manifested, in his wisdom, love, and grace, to our faith.

1st, In the nature and design of the undertaking itself; to raise up a fallen tabernacle—to make it more glorious, rising from its ruins—to make it a work of grace, and cause grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life—to baffle Satan, and destroy his work; bruising his head in the souls of the elect: Herein was great grace displayed—poor man delivered from the worst slavery, by him whom he naturally looked upon as his enemy. View him in every part of his office; teaching and enlightening, as a Prophet

phet—revealing God to poor souls, by his Spirit ; view him doing this to wandering souls and enemies—doing it in consequence of an undertaking with the Father ; view him following them, and never leaving them, till he do them good : View him, in all these parts of his undertaking, offering his service to us. Indeed, when Jesus manifests himself in this manner, saints feel what others only talk of—this must be the finger of God ; there is something here to which nothing in heaven or earth is like : View him travelling in the greatness of his strength—fighting in our cause—dying for us—interceding for us. Unbelief says, How can these things be ? Faith views them, with wonder, as the stupenduous effects of Sovereign love and mercy—learns to deal with God on this representation of him—apprehends him, in and through the Mediator, even when sensible of lying under a load of sin and guilt !

3dly, The glory of God's grace, faithfulness, and wisdom, is manifested by the Office and Undertaking of Christ, in regard of his fitness for that undertaking. As he is God's chosen, so he is a choice worthy of God. By this God seems in earnest to save us, our concerns being put in such hands. It is not easy for a sinner to see that God is in earnest, willing to do him good : But the choice that he has made of Christ, seen in God's light, and taken up by faith, opens the councils of his heart : Hereby, said God to Abraham, *I know thou lovest me, when thou hast not withheld thine only Son.* Now, Christ was in every respect fit for his undertaking : As to shewing the secrets of the Covenant, he was in the Father's bosom from eternity ; he received, as Mediator, the Spirit without measure ; he knows the secrets of our hearts, and how

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to deal with them; he has the pity of a father—eyes that slumber not, ears that become not dull of hearing. *Further*, He is fit for his undertaking to satisfy Divine Justice, both as God and man—fit to have the government laid on his shoulder, able to save to the uttermost. Now, in this fitness does faith take up much of the wisdom and love of God—ventures out on it, as so discovered, saying, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit*: I adore thy grace—I approve personally thy choice, &c. In the

3^d place, The glory of God's grace, faithfulness, and wisdom, is manifested in the Office and Undertaking of Christ, in regard of the suitability of that undertaking to our miserable case. Men who have not a faith's view of Christ see no such thing; and therefore do not reckon his gospel worthy of all acceptation. Sinners, feeling their burden, and groaning under deadness, &c. see it not; and therefore remain in doubts. Misapprehensions in this matter, believe it, mar all; a practical apprehension of it, on the other hand, strengthens and directs faith: The soul sees in Christ all it wants; fulness of grace and truth—grace to raise from spiritual death, grace to draw unto God, grace to keep with him for ever; a full righteousness, adapted not only to guilt in general, but to my guilt. This, I say, is seeing the glory of God indeed. The faith that apprehends this gives God his due—Oh seek this! It is one of the great things that stand in your way and mine: It is one thing to see a general fitness in Christ's undertaking, and another to see a total fitness for myself—this leads to put on the Lord Christ, as a robe suited to us. Now, seeing this in Christ, is seeing (as our Lord said to Philip) the Father indeed—it is seeing the salvation

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of God, a salvation like God—a salvation breathing eternal wisdom, mercy, faithfulness, and grace. In the 4th place, The Undertaking and Office of our Redeemer manifests the glory of God in the face of Christ, in regard that in the whole of this undertaking he acts by commission from the Father. Eternal Love is still to be viewed as the source of all. Christ tells us, that his seed was GIVEN to him—it was love to this seed, free and sovereign LOVE, that sent Christ into the world. There was a glorious harmony in the Council of Peace about this matter: Therefore, the LOVE of the Father, the MERCY of the Son, the WISDOM and condescending GRACE of the Spirit, equally appear in it. Each are glorified in his distinct operations—each glorified in thy salvation! for herein the Father works, the Son works, the Spirit works—he works in the human nature of Christ, in the application of his purchase, in sanctifying and perfecting holiness in his seed. Here is a lovely view presented—salvation thoroughly secured, and the highest encouragement given to venture our souls on this bottom, wherein a whole trinity is engaged. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XVI.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

IT was prophesied concerning Christ, That though he was the brightness of the Father's glory, yet, when he should appear, and be preached, many should see no beauty in him why he should be desired, Isa. liii. 2. Daily experience is a confirmation of this prophecy: Men hear of Christ, and profess his name, yet see no glory in him; and will not deal with God by him—this is the essence of unbelief. Whereas God has put glory on Christ, and appointed him to be the head-stone of the corner, unbelief disallows of him—*The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner*, Psal. cxviii. 22. Mark xii. 10.—*Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 4. Faith gives Christ his due—gives him the place in the heart God has given him in the word: Unbelief, though professing regard to Christ, sets him aside from it. Now, one part of the honour put on Christ is, That in him, or in his Face, God makes his glory to be seen; they are therefore formally condemned of unbelief who see no glory there—who deal not with God by Christ. To lead your faith to its proper exercise in this matter, I proposed, as the text directs, To shew in what respects the glory of God

appears in the face of Jesus Christ. I shewed that it is manifested, not for speculation, but for direction, and a foundation to faith—*1st*, In his Person—*2dly*, In his Office. And,

THIRDLY, I am to shew you, That the glory of God is manifested in the face of Christ by his *Sufferings* and *Death*. The sufferings and death of Christ are, in one view or other, wrought into every part of our religion. I am not now to consider them in an extensive light, but with relation, strictly, to the subject in hand. Now, the death of Christ was the GREAT MEAN whereby God was to be glorified—*Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified*, said the Lord. Probably a view was had to this in the answer made to Christ's prayer, John xii. 28. "As I have manifested my glory in an eminent manner by what is past of thy work, so I will more eminently glorify it in what remains—chiefly thy Death and Passion." Now, herein is the glory of God manifested:

1st, As it was a declaration of the purity and holiness of his Law and Nature. Never was such a testimony given to it as in this. When sinners are punished in their own persons, God's holiness and justice are glorified; but then enemies and rebels receive their due—they are but poor worms. What David's men said to him, to hinder him from exposing himself, (thou art worth a thousand of us) is, with the greatest justice to be said of Christ. If any had been, or were to be passed without Justice being glorified, sure it must be he; yet it pleased God to bruise him—then was the Law made honourable—the holiness of God's nature vindicated; so that, in the forgiveness of sin that is with him, he is to be feared: This is ground of terror to impenitent sinners, whether they believe

believe it or not ; ground of holy fear to saints—of admiration of the Divine Majesty—caution of offending—hatred of sin—and, *finally*, of joy and boldness in the Lord's way. God is more glorified in the salvation wrought for thee by Christ, the surety, than by thy personal suffering, or any possible righteousness wrought by thee or for thee. Thus does the obedience and death of Christ give a suitable and interesting view of the glory of God. In the

2d place, The glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ, is manifested by his Death and Sufferings, as they were the blessed effect of sovereign free love and mercy. The views that natural men have of this matter are faint and languid, and lead to no right exercise of heart: But, when the scripture would give us the highest idea of the love and sovereignty of God in conjunction, it sends us to the Cross of Christ, John iii. 16. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.* 1 John iv. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Rom. v. 8. *But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.* There we learn it so as to believe, to entertain other thoughts of God and his designs towards us than naturally we can do: Every act of severity to the Surety was an act of mercy to us—by these stripes were we to be healed. Let us then view the greatness of the person suffering! The sword awak'd against him who is God's fellow! This gift is the very flower of Paradise—the delight of heaven! If such is the stream, what must be the fountain of life from which it flows! View the bitterness of the sufferings; the Lord Christ sore amaz'd—sorrowful and very heavy—in an agony! (these are the words

words of the Evangelist)—sinking under a load of guilt not his own—bowing his head, and giving up the ghost! Alas! how fatally has the god of this world blinded our hearts, if we see nothing here but a root out of a dry ground! Unprofitably do we consider it, my Brethren, if it only stirs our natural affection—if it is not the mean of begetting in us a lively faith and apprehension of that sovereign love from which it flows. *Further*, View the persons for whom he thus suffered; sinners—rebels—those who had no thought of returning to God—in whose hands were still the weapons of rebellion against him! The blood flowing from these wounds heal the souls who, in a certain sense, are the authors of these wounds—Christ is wounded in the house of his friends! Zech. xiii. 6. Here is sovereignty displayed indeed!—God acting like himself. Far are these thoughts above our comprehensions, and far remote from any shadow of merit. Great, my Brethren, is our guilt, black are our souls—every form of misery has invaded us, we are dead in sins: But what view is here given us of Divine love and grace! Come, says the Lord to you, and let us reason together, Isa. i. 18. *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Are we so far removed, that this love and grace, passing knowledge, cannot lay hold on us? Is the stain too deep for this blood to wash out? What bowels of mercy may be expected by returning prodigals in such a Father? O come and see! Behold the Son of Man lifted up, that we may live! &c. Or, are our hearts so hard as not to be melted by this love? Remember unbelief flights it—robs God of the glory of it; sin is a repaying ha-
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tred for it—can I say more! O think, ye faints and sinners, and sorrow after a godly sort!

3dly, The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ is manifested by his Death and Sufferings, with respect to the end and design of it. He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Here is the Divine wisdom glorified, in falling on a method so proper—making it so answerable to the end. By the death and sufferings of Christ, an everlasting righteousness is brought in—called, *The righteousness of God*, in opposition to our own, Rom. x. 3.; because it is of God's appointment and ordination, and because it is brought in by God-man. It is called, *The righteousness of Faith*, Rom. iv. 13.; because apprehended by faith. It is said to be *revealed from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 17.; because revealed, secured, and warranted by the faithfulness of God to us, and apprehended by faith in us. This is the scripture doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, and consonant to the experience of believers. Now, the wisdom of God, in our salvation, is here manifested. This righteousness, being brought in by Christ's death, is declared to be in him, as a treasure, for his elect. It is so laid in the Covenant, that, in putting on Christ by faith, we put on this white raiment; and it is a righteous thing with God to receive us therein, looking on us as in the face of his Anointed. In the

4th place, God has manifested his Glory, to our faith in the Sufferings and death of Christ, by his declaration of accepting them for all the purposes heretofore mentioned. He is *well pleased for his righteousness sake*, &c. Isa. xlii. 21.—it was by God's appointment that both offering and offerer were designed. Under the law, no sacrifice could be presented but by his
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command—this gave it its efficacy. Now, Christ being God's ordinance, his offering was accepted by him; the whole preaching of the gospel is a declaration of this: Hereby is the design of grace manifested—hereby is God's word of salvation magnified, and has a stamp set on it—hereby it is declared to be safe for a sinner to venture on this word for eternity. O sinner, sell all, and buy it!—it is a surer charter for heaven, than any king's patent is for an earthly inheritance.

FOURTHLY, The Glory of God is manifested in the Face of Christ by his *Resurrection* and *Glorification*. After our Lord had by himself purged away our sins, he burst the gates of Death. It was with him as with his people, this was the last enemy he had personally to conquer. He is said to be raised by the glory of the Father, Rom. vi. Hereby his personal glory was manifested, and his goodness declared. The chariots of God are said to have attended him in his ascent, Psal. lxviii. 17. and the sons of God shouted for joy. Herein also was the Glory of God manifested,

1st, As it was an evidence of the Divine Faithfulness. A joy was set before him—it was promised, That he should prolong his days, and see his seed. The faithfulness of God lay, therefore, as it were, in this, as it does in every promise made to us; in view of this Christ prayed, That, as Mediator, he might be glorified; partly for this reason the Apostle declares, That, if Christ be not risen, our faith of the promise is vain; because all of them were set on the same sure foundation.

2^{dly}, The Glory of God is manifested in the Resurrection and Glorification of Christ, as it was the triumph of the Divine power and grace over the principalities and powers of darkness. These were set in
opposition

opposition to God—to his kingdom of grace and righteousness. They had triumphed over fallen man—had kept him under sad vassalage. Jesus appears in the likeness and nature of man. Satan was set against him—attacked him at the beginning—continued his assaults, and at last bruised his heel. Now, the combat lay between the great Captain of our salvation and the powers of darkness; our all turned on it, but the security was absolute. Christ personal, in his human nature arose like one from sleep, and baffled Satan's designs finally. Ascending into heaven, he triumphed over him in his human nature, and bruised the old serpent's head. Thus, by conquest he came to his mediatorial throne—Omnipotence was displayed, and grace reigned!

3dly, The Glory of God is declared and set forth in the Resurrection and Glorification of Christ, as it is the example and virtual spring of that full and complete victory of Christ, which is now the object of our faith and hope. In this view it is an act of love and good-will to men—an act of grace to the elect; it is, as it were, a declaration of God in their favour, seeing it is expressly called *first-fruits*, with respect to them. In all things, so far as is necessary for their blessedness, are the saints to be conformed to their Head. His rising was a public act, so was his glorification. By virtue hereof, his people are said to be partakers with him in a first resurrection—to live with him—to triumph over the devil by that faith which unites to him. Hence is faith said to be the substance of things unseen; for it applies all in Christ, who is the root of all our blessings, and has life in himself, as Mediator. Hence is the use of faith in justification, in sanctification, in triumphing over death, the world, and the devil:

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devil: This is the continual strain of the scripture. Now, I say, in this respect the glory of God is manifested in Christ, in so far as, by raising him from the dead, all his perfections flow forth in their original exercise towards the elect. Thus they receive a risen Christ—viewing God as in him, in this manner—God drawing nigh to a poor dead soul with a blessing suitable to his wants. In the

4th place, The Glory of God was manifested in the Resurrection and glorification of Jesus, in regard that thereby he was declared both Lord and Christ. A public seal was set on him; a sceptre of righteousness declared to be in his hands—that he is the HEAD of all principalities and powers to the church—that he shall reign in his people, and over his enemies. Thus the whole plan of glorious grace is manifested in Jesus; he is made the channel of Divine communication to men.—May the interests of our souls be in his hands, where we are sure they will be safe for ever.

The following heads are a continuation of the subject.

FIFTHLY, The Glory of God is manifested in the face of Christ by his administration of the kingdom of grace.

1st, By the dispensation of the Spirit, an act of most amazing love and mercy.

2dly, By the fulness of the grace administered by him.

3dly, By the sure efficacy of it.

4thly, By making every thing subservient to the advancement of his grace towards his people—providence, angels, &c.

5thly, By the exact correspondence thereof to the promises, they being made the channels of Divine grace.

SIXTHLY,

SIXTHLY, The glory of God will be wonderfully manifested therein at last, when the mystery of God is finished.

So far concerning this dispensation, the manifesting the glory of God; and the manner of it in the face of Christ. It remains to shew the suitableness of this way of manifesting it.

1st, It advances the glory of the Mediator.

2^{dly}, It gives an interesting view of the Divine perfections.

3^{dly}, It is adapted to the terms of the gospel-offer, which calls us directly to Christ, and to God by him.

Amen.

S E R M O N XVII.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

THE subject, now long before us, has been treated at some length : It required a large discussion. We proposed to treat the Spirit's work, as laid down in it, in beginning and carrying on the new creation. There is now a great restraint of HIS work, my Brethren ; and, therefore, these things are little considered, and coldly felt. Now we propose to enter on an *Improvement* of the whole. I shall begin with offering these inferences. In the

FIRST place, From what has been said, We may see that the work of salvation, as passing on all that believe, is highly worthy of its Author ; it is worthy of him in itself, and in respect of the way wherein he brings it about. There is nothing more frequent than for carnal hearts to object—How can these things be? Can God shew such care about poor worms? Is it consistent with his greatness and Majesty? Shall he dwell with men by his Spirit? Hence prejudice is entertained against the whole of Practical Christianity. These prejudices secretly work themselves into our hearts, our devotions, &c. Now herein we greatly err. The work of salvation is highly worthy of God ; therein he manifests all his perfections and glory, and gives
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all of them their proper exercise. He manifests not only the glory of the Godhead absolutely, but of the ever-blessed Trinity. His Spirit works—builds a temple from the ruins of fallen man. Satan is dispossessed, his kingdom of darkness overturned, and as many witnesses of the Divine Glory are raised up as there are souls saved. Mean-time, his Eternal Son is honoured; from HIM, as from the radiant brightness of the Father's glory, do the beams shine—even his lowest humiliation makes it shine more clear; yea, the lower we are sunk, the more gloriously is grace displayed in the restoration of our natures. Indeed, Christians are taught to say, Even so Father, it seemed good in thy sight, and therein they acquiesce. Yet you see, that, considering God as he of whom are all things, and for whose glory are all things, the salvation he works is worthy of him. Hence, let us adore his wisdom, and come with boldness to the throne of his grace.

SECONDLY, From what has been said, We may take occasion to reflect, that there are many varieties in the work of God in the soul—in all there is a shining into the heart, but not in the same degree. Sometimes Divine Light makes slow advances, and from insensible beginnings; sometimes it is, like the sun breaking from behind a cloud, with an overwhelming lustre. So our Lord opened *his* eyes, whom at first he made only to see men as trees walking, and whom he brought gradually to as distinct perception of the light as these to whom he gave perfect seeing at once, Mark x. 52.; nor is this opposite to regeneration being an instantaneous work: Life is life when hardly discernible, as well as when strong and vigorous. Thus every human face resembles another, yet in every one there is some
diversity

diversity of the same features. Perhaps, Christian, God called thee in early days, and revealed to thee thyself and his Christ almost with the same breath: Perhaps he wearied thee in the greatness of thy way, and did not reveal thy help till thou wast long under a felt bondage: Perhaps he darted a weaker ray into thy dark soul, so that at evening-time it was light: Perhaps the Sun of righteousness rose unclouded, and shone so full as to cast out all sensible fear and darkness. All this is consistent with the experience of them that believe—A variety this glorifying God, yet preserving the general method of grace. The consideration of this may be useful to doubting faints; and, if we view it right, it detects vain pretenders also; for the essentials of the work are always preserved.

THIRDLY, From what has been said, We may see what ground of thankfulness these have who have been called out of darkness unto God's marvellous light. When ten Lepers were cleansed, Christ said, *Where are the nine?* If any of us cannot deny that God has done us good, sure we ought not to be silent; not though the view thereof is not so lively as sometime it may have been: Consider how sovereignty has distinguished thee—found thee out among others—left them and taken thee—Why, wast thou better than they? Far from it: Think what thou wast—sleeping on the top of a mast—deep darkness overspreading thee; if left to thyself, thou wouldst have been such to this day, or herding with the profane, or feeding on ashes with hypocrites: If God had left thee in the crisis, thou mightest have been eternally lost, and the chains of death, this day, ten-fold stronger than ever! Think, nothing but the Sun of righteousness could have enlightened thy darkness! Think,
how

how thou wast treating God mean-while ! Wast thou making any advances towards him ? Far from it—He saw thee, and his eye pitied, while the weapons of rebellion were still in thy hands ! Yet more, What has God brought thee to ? Into a marvellous light ; brought the beginning of heaven to thy soul—shewn thee himself—the path of life—fed thee with angels food. O, my brethren, let your hearts be enlarged ! Let us exalt his name together—let us praise the Father of lights, and Christ, the Wisdom of God, in whom his glory shines ; the Eternal Spirit, who has secretly entered and taken possession of our souls for himself, and will dwell with us for ever.

FOURTHLY, From what has been said, We may see, That God's people have power given them to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner ; this is the privilege and character of all the saints—a privilege whereby they are distinguished from natural men ; see 1 Cor. ii. 10—16. Natural men know, speculatively, something of the glory of God, but not in a spiritual manner—it is not agreeable to the ends wherefore it is revealed. They have no uptaking of the glory and excellency of the gospel—its suitableness : Hence they view it, at best, as men do any thing in a dream. Christians, on the other hand, have God in Christ revealed to them ; hence they know the mind of Christ, and discern it in the word—in a sermon, &c. ; in a promise, so as to apply it, and know how and on what ground they do so ; some of them indeed more, and others less ; but all of them as far as is necessary for their salvation and particular concerns.

FIFTHLY, From what has been said, We may learn the sad and fatal consequence of sin, as provoking the Spirit

Spirit of God to withdraw from his own people, and leave them in darkness; not totally indeed, but partially; not as to his indwelling, but as to felt testifying. Does not thy experience tell thee, that the clouds return after the rain? Is not the sun obscured sometimes with thee at mid-day? Oh! consider whence this comes—Say, with David, *My folly makes it so*. All sin grieves the Spirit—is opposite to his nature and working, and known sin is chiefly so: This deadens the heart—estranges from God and duty—raises sad mists and perplexities in the soul—awakes a spirit of bondage in the heart; and likewise provokes God, in the way of chastisement, to take away the light of his countenance—*For the iniquity of his covetousness, I was wroth and smote him; I hid me from him*, saith the Lord. Hence, thou goest to thy prayers, but art sad; the face of the throne is turned away; the promise has not its wonted relish; views of God and his glory do not go deep into the heart, as heretofore: Thou goest to the mount, to look from thence; but mists have arisen, and intercept thy view. Satan, mean-time, takes his advantage. Ah, sad case! What shall I say! I had warning; but a wretched heart has led me aside! I have fallen by mine iniquity; mine it is indeed. Oh, that I could abhor myself in dust and ashes! I am not able to help myself! *Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!* Isa. lxiv. 1.

SIXTHLY, From what has been said, We may see, That there is no right dealing with God but in Christ; and no right application of the promise but by viewing it in him. God's glory is manifested—But how? In the face of Christ: In Christ he is revealed, merciful and gracious to pardon—mighty to save—just in
saving

saving—faithful to secure us—faithful in calling us—holy, to be loved by his people—wise, to lead them; there he comes near to save. But what is he to sinners, absolutely considered?—A consuming fire. These therefore, that presume on his mercy, without viewing it here, know not what they do—these who think otherwise to escape his Justice do but mock it—these who pretend to deal with him otherwise attempt to overthrow his design, and frustrate his purpose of glorifying himself. Can you be safe in this way?—Do not your consciences say no? It is not to name the name of Christ; this most part will do, and yet stop far short of Christ. Faith, dealing with God as in Christ, views him offering himself this way—to be our God in him, bringing us into a mystical union with him. Faith is pleased with the way, and approves of it for itself with the whole heart and soul. Knowest thou this? Verily, if thou dost not the love of God is not in thee. Oh! hear, and live!—I said further, There is no right application of the promise but by viewing it in Christ. This few do—most pretend to apply it they know not why, they are easily satisfied. Alas! my Brethren, a man may be feeding on ashes when he thinks he is feeding on God's promise! I am sure I say nothing here that needs discourage the faith of the elect, or deter others from coming to God; for I call thee to Christ—the sure way. Take the Bread of Life from his hand; thou art sure he is willing to give—he gives liberally, not withholding from any hungry soul. O take, and be satisfied! And, Oh may God enable you and me to do it!—*Amen.*

SEVENTHLY, From what has been said see, That there is an analogy between the life of faith now, and that of sight in heaven. Now the glory of God is

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seen—How? In the face of Christ. Here faith sees it, and thence draws comfort; thence takes direction as to coming to God. From these faith's views flow the holy fear, love, delight, complacency, and thankfulness of a Christian. This, through the working of the Spirit, goes through the whole of the Christian life. Now, in heaven we are sure the saints behold the glory of God—How? They shall see it also in the face of Christ, and behold his glory for ever. The Lamb is said to be in the midst of the throne; he will be an eternal witness of the mercy of Jehovah—eternally the channel and evidence of his LOVE to the elect—the brightness of his glory; and hence is called the *Sun of righteousness*.—Here it might be proper to take more particularly into consideration, the case of these who complain of God's hiding his face from them at present. They have reason to think they have beheld his glory, but seem to themselves to be almost relapsed into their original darkness—*Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him*, Job xxiii. 8, 9. Hence grace is withering, and comfort withdrawn—O that I knew where I might find him! say such. To thee, I think, the Lord saith,

1st, Search into the cause why God hides himself from thee—*Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord*, Lam. iii. 40. There is an Achan in the camp—some idol of jealousy; may-be Christ has come, and thou wast asleep, Song v. 2. Perhaps he means to go, and return to his place, till thou acknowledge thine iniquity in another manner. Perhaps thou sayest, Alas! there are many causes—Search
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the deeper ; ask his mind ; fix on the particular evil ; cry, Search me and try me—take it, whatever it is, to the cross of Christ.

2dly, Give not over all for lost, nor say in thine heart, There is no hope. This unbelief prompts to ; but God gives no encouragement to it—it is heaping up more guilt—it is saying to Christ, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. What is this !—a flat contradiction to the very design of his office ! Remember the morning cometh as well as the night.

3dly, Wait on God patiently in the way of duty, and in faith of his promise—*Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, Isa. l. 10.* David desired to dwell in HIS house, to behold his glory, Psal. xxvii. 4. You see a promise is made to such as thou art—to one walking in darkness, and having NO LIGHT. Ah ! but I cannot call him MY God—what then have I to do with the promise ? Go to him a-new—if thou canst not plead the relation on experience, plead it, as a poor sinner, on the offer and promise. This is highly necessary to be minded by all God's people.

4thly, Plead and ask the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit in a gospel way. We ask and have not, because we ask amiss—amiss in the manner as well as the end. This is a dead fly in our prayers, and all our spiritual exercises. Ask in Christ's name—ask it freely through him ; and the free Spirit will revive thee, and make broken bones to rejoice. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XVIII.

2 COR. iv. 6.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

IT highly concerns us, my Brethren, to apply to ourselves the Lord's word, according to our several interests therein. Without such application we are, like Balaam, beholding Christ, but not nigh. It was a poor passport to heaven, to say, *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*, Luke xiii. 26. So will it be to say, We have heard and understood the way of dealing with God, and the Spirit's work. As an extending of the application of this subject, I propose,

SECONDLY, *An use of Trial.* To be careless of trying ourselves, or unwilling to it, is a bad symptom. This hides many a secret wound, and leads souls often to hell with a lie in their right hands. On the other hand, self-examination, though grievous to nature, is blest in its consequences. Now, the subject leads us to propose the following *Evidences* of a savingly enlightened soul :

FIRST, Are you enabled, under a feeling sense of sin, to come unto God as in Christ for rest? He that doth so shall never perish. Some, indeed, flatter themselves herewith vainly—They say, Lord, Lord, but
come

come not to be delivered from sin, as the greatest burden—but from wrath: Not so a Christian—his coming to God is not in the way of complaint; he comes, not because he thinks it an easy matter to get rid of the burden, or obtain pardon; presumption is whole hearted—faith is not so; the Christian feels sin deep, in its guilt and power; he comes on the gospel report—but how? To a God in Christ. His faith is founded on a discovery of this, and of the glory of God herein—he sees the one adapted to the other; and this discovery is the mean of drawing him forward.

SECONDLY, Have you seen a God in Christ so far as to love him, and express the joy of your hearts in the contrivance of his grace. Love to God is one of the chief marks of a Christian—it flows out towards him as manifested in Christ. Many say they love God, and know not why; the hearts of Christians are drawn out on a view of his mercy, truth, and holiness. God loves himself because of the excellence of his nature, and so do they on the gospel view of it—they love Christ, and God in him. He is altogether lovely, says the Spouse; sure he who is ALTOGETHER ignorant of this is no Christian.

THIRDLY, Do you maintain a correspondence with Christ, under a sense of your need of all his fulness? Hypocrites come as strangers to Christ; and, for a day, bow down their head like a bulrush; but never had a practical view of the necessity of receiving their all from him: Hence they live not on Christ, but themselves. But what sayest thou?—is thy life a life of faith? Comest thou to Christ to remain with him?—to live in him for all? This is employing Christ in
his

his own way, and agreeable to his desire and promise, and so thou canst not miss the blessing. But,

FOURTHLY, Has the shining of divine light in thy soul left a stamp of the divine image in thee? If we have beheld the divine glory aright it has done so, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Christians, by beholding Christ in faith, are made like him—the natural enmity of their hearts is in part broken; hence they love what God loves, and because he loves it—he loves it because agreeable to his nature, so do they. They delight in getting a victory over sin—they breathe after more holiness, and make use of Christ for that blessed purpose. In like manner, they hate what God hates, because he hates it, and because opposite to his glory. They hate all sin, and chiefly that in their souls whereby God is most dishonoured. Think of this, and try yourselves by it.

FIFTHLY, Do you groan under remaining darkness in your souls? This also is an hopeful symptom. Darkness remaining is a part of the body of sin and death. Christians know it better than others, because they know its contrary: They cry, *O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest*, Psal. lv. 6. They know what it is to miss him in duty: Others can be easily satisfied here; not so they—they go away sad; the renewed nature cannot feed on husks. Now, the total absence of these proclaims a sad state; and the being of them, in some degree, a blessed one. Try then, and try over again; and may God shine into our hearts by them.

It remains now to conclude our meditations on this subject by

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, *An use of Exhortation* upon the whole. You have heard, my Dear Brethren, of the Spirit's work in bringing souls to God; the view that he gives of him in Christ. What pity if this matter proves useless to any one! Every subject of this nature, I look on as a special renewing of the season of grace. Shall the summer be spent, and we not saved? Shall God be coming and seeking fruit and finding none? Shall we have it to say, Lord, sinners made excuses and would not come? God forbid. Let us set ourselves down, then, in God's presence; and let the exhortation be directed to the following sorts of persons:

FIRST, To you on whose hearts this day of power and grace has passed; and *God hath commanded the light to shine out of darkness into your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*

1st, I exhort you to bless the Glorious Author of this work, with your souls and all that is within you. Offer to him thanksgiving, for it is comely and fit. Let your hearts and lips correspond together in the work of praise. Let your souls silently speak of it also—His open ear hears. He listens to the early tribute arising from a renewed heart. Jesus listens with pleasure to these breathings of the new creature. Your hymns shall correspond with those of heaven. You shall be learning to lisp out the language of Zion. Let your praise bear proportion to the glorious grace manifested to you-ward; to its greatness, in its spring—the eternal electing love of God; in its purchase—the Mediation of Christ; its application—the giving and working of the Holy Spirit. Look back on thyself, forlorn and helpless. Look inward on the ascend-
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ing fabric of grace! Look forward to the glory to be revealed, and now dawning! Look to the unseen hand that guided thy steps in the nick of conversion, and since! Arise, dead soul, and praise the Lord! Are we not ashamed, when we think of HIM, whose body only being healed, lift up his voice to glorify God, Luke xvii. 15. Go and do likewise.

2dly, Art thou called with so high and honourable a calling? Walk worthy of it. Think what God designs thee for. Think, Christ has made thee a partaker of his Spirit, and assumed thee into a nearness and fellowship with himself. Does not his grace teach thee *that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?* Tit. ii. 12. Wilt thou grieve him after all? Wilt thou wound him in the house of his Friend? Wilt thou take his enemy to thy bosom, and wilt thou treat him as an enemy!

3dly, Maintain a constant correspondence with the Father of Lights through Jesus Christ. Thou art far from having attained—darkness remains; enemies are left for thy exercise. Christ wants thee to live much with himself: He loves thee, and hath provided for thee. Thy flock is in his hand. Thou canst not dishonour him more than by ceasing to give him employment. Thy need, O sinner, and his glory are linked together in this respect!—Blest necessity!

4thly, Take encouragement under thy difficulties of every kind: Great they may be, and none but God can know how great! Thy heart, perhaps, is like to stagger at the thought. O think what he has done already! What a wide step he has taken! What was the original state of thy soul?—A chaos! There God delivered.

vered. Is any thing too hard for his power? Is any thing thou needest too much for his grace! But,

SECONDLY, Let me direct the *exhortation* to doubting souls, whose way is covered with darknes; and remain in suspense whether to call it day or night.

1st, Take all your doubts to God, and lay them before him—other complaining is often fruitless. Satan may be too hard for thee. God will bring thee to himself, and then do thee good! Oh! if we knew the way—Bringing a perplexed soul to the Sun of righteousness is the way to get it cleared up. Knowest thou not that it is God's work to arise and scatter his enemies; it is his work to unravel what we have darkened—Cry, *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*, Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

2^{dly}, Rest not on a peradventure in that case: Instead of seeking what may smooth matters, go to the bottom. It is not satisfying peace that God's people themselves get when they do not go deep enough. Oh! trust not thy soul to a peradventure; that would look as if God had never shewed thee the value of it. But,

3^{dly}, Essay going to, and believing in Christ. Many, under doubts, languish sadly by a mistake here; they think that all that is past must appear right, and then come to Christ. Alas! perceivest thou not the language of the devil! If we want life, where shall we go but where life is? Shall we stay till our disease is healed ere we venture to go to the physician? Is any thing in us the ground of faith, or is it not something without us?—In due time Christ will give thee light,

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poor foul, in the way of believing—this is the way. But, now,

THIRDLY and *lastly*, Suffer me to direct the *exhortation* to these who are still in gross darkness, and know not the gift of God. God knows who these are; while I pretend to speak to them, Satan stands up to resist; for every time he takes you, poor creature, away from the net, it is a new triumph to him! Ah! do you not tremble for yourselves, you who are strangers to conversion-work—you who make light of sin, and fear it not—you who have no changes—you who rest in common grace—you who have a form of praying and no more? Are not many such in this congregation? Oh that you would hear and live!

1st, Let me call on you, my Brethren, to lay to heart the sadness and misery of your present case. In thy account, perhaps, it is not sad; so much the worse—the devil has blinded thee. Oh, what art thou? A rebel against God!—a prisoner under sentence—one sleeping and dreaming on the top of a mast. Art thou resolved to stand out against God! Art thou mocking him to his face! Art thou indeed trampling on the blood of the Covenant! Art thou saying to God, Depart from me! Poor man—poor indeed if thou knewest! Knowest thou what God says of thee? Knowest thou that he hears, and is a silent witness of what passes betwixt you and me? Knowest thou what the Judge on the Throne has pronounced against unbelievers? Rev. xx. Time will come when this awful truth will be believed. O that it were now! But,

2^{dly}, If thou thinkest of thyself, what is thy resolution? Does thy heart sink as a stone? Oh no—Christ comes to gather thee! He is come indeed by his gospel; he waits, he calls—Whom? Thee sinner, the worst

worst of finners ; all and every one hearing me. Oh come, there is bread and to spare ! Oh come, he will give you the wedding garment ? Oh come, he will forgive what is past ! Oh come, he will give thee himself ! Oh come and see, every soul that has a heavy load of sin ! Oh come, ye that have spent your money for that which is not bread ! Oh come, ye that have been long bound by Satan ! Oh come, ye that grieve that you cannot come as ye would ! Cry, and he will hear you. O look, ye dying souls, and live ! I declare that this is God's will and command : Will ye take away the guilt of having rejected it ? Verily the devil (if I may so speak) will laugh at thee if thou so dost. But, O think who calls thee, and to what ! Let us say, with one voice, *I will arise and go to my Father's house* ! Or, at least, Let there be joy in heaven over one lost sheep found again. Then will God, and Christ, and the Spirit, who all say Come, rejoice to see the coming soul, and come over mountains and hills to meet him. *Amen.*——“ I follow thee, I follow ‘ thee ! Welcome thy call ! Come in thou blessed of ‘ the Lord ! Here is work for such grace as thine ! “ Since thou art willing to take it, I say willing also, “ with heart and soul.”

S E R M O N X I X .

LUKE xxii. 31. 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THE Holy Apostle Paul, who was well acquainted with a Christian life in experience, tells us, *That it is bid with Christ in God.* The experience of Christians, if rightly understood, will witness this. Grace is often in its beginnings small, like a grain of *mustard seed*—is opposed in its progress, and is often almost choked up with corruption ; Satan endeavouring to blow out the smoking flax : In the Christian's view it shall seem gone, yet it revives like the corn ; the roots are left in the ground, when the tree appears cut down—it emerges victorious. The Christian is thus a wonder to himself. Whence is the spring ? With Christ in God. How kept alive ? By influences from thence ; but I cannot seek them—*But I have prayed for thee*, says Christ. Somewhat may be felt of this glorious truth now, more will hereafter—the mystery will then be unfolded. If the Lord shine on them, these words may lead us into such views as may edify—open to you the springs of grace, and give faith's views of the Glory of Christ, and teach to remember him ; perhaps may enure us to heaven in our way thither. O to be steadfast in this !—The words are introduced by way of caution and comfort to Peter.

ter. God would cure him of his forwardness, partly by his suffering him to fall.¹ Satan envied—sought, as in Job's case, to be let loose upon him, and upon the rest also. What is wonderful, Christ foresaw all—knew what he was to do! O glorious grace! yet loved him, and honoured him with particular confidence! He sees, at one view, from beginning to end all our slips; and therefore provides against the fatal consequences of them—" *I have prayed for thee* already; I was not an idle spectator of the plots laid "against thee." Methinks this voice of Christ has something of an heavenly sound: O it is like him—Lovely and loving Jesus! I hope it shall prove useful to us in many respects—hush many a fear—shew salvation standing sure—enlarge our hearts, and encourage us to look within the vail. You will remember what was the event with respect to Peter. It is by comparing the text with this, that (without pretending to exhaust the subject) I propose the following Doctrinal Observation:

THAT the Lord's people may be brought under various cases of trial and difficulty, which Jesus foresees and does not think fit to prevent; yet, by his effectual intercession, both before and in time of their trials, he provides that their grace be not altogether extinguished, and that their spiritual enemies shall not be finally victorious.

In treating this subject, I propose,

I. To lay before you some of these trying and difficult cases whereinto the Lord's people are often brought by the power of their spiritual enemies.

II. To

II. To shew you by what means they fall into such depths of difficulty and trial.

III. Why the Lord Christ permits them to fall thus low, and does not prevent their perplexity.

IV. To illustrate and open the nature and end, and particular application of this intercession of Christ for his people in every case.

V. To prove and illustrate the efficacy thereof. And, *Lastly*, Make some improvement of the subject.—May the Lord give the whole, and bless it to me and others. *Amen.*

FIRST, then, *I am to lay before you some of these trying and difficult cases whereinto the Lord's people are often brought by the power of their spiritual enemies.* Hereby, perhaps, Christians will see their own not singular, and bear with more patience. Many a case needs peculiarly such Divine compassion and help as the text sets before us. Note, Here we propose to describe the Christian as sometimes brought into depths, &c. And, in the

FIRST place, One case wherein a Christian is brought low, and needs the aids of Christ's sympathy, is, when he falls deep into the snare of sin, and his guilt is attended with many aggravations. This was the case of Peter foretold, and provided against, by our Lord; of David, when he added one sin to another; this is the case of the Psalmist, expressed Psal. xl. 12. xxxviii. 4. A view of sin has different effects on a Christian from another; he loaths himself; often the hands hang down; it is as an arrow in his heart; he will even, though unjustly, say, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man; especially if his sin has peculiar aggravations—if formerly checked for it—conscience alarmed—if it is a relapse

relapse—against great grace, &c. Worse than this is, when the man sleeps on for a while, as is sometimes the case, or sighs and goes backward; then the things that remain are ready to die—till God send a messenger to say, Thou art the man, or by degrees brings him to himself. Innumerable trains has Satan laid for this purpose, he knows our weakest side—would subdue us, if there was not one stronger to break the snare. Satan will then treat the poor soul as his captive; alarm, perhaps, with terrors, discourage hopes—endeavour to get him deeper into the snare; but Christ has his eye on the poor thing—hears him, perhaps, bemoaning himself, sympathises with him, and keeps him, so that he is not lost. But,

SECONDLY, Sometimes an uncommon deadness and want of spirituality prevails over the Christian; then, indeed, his case is trying and hard. Such the case of the Spouse, Song v. 2. This will prevail so as a Christian shall seem quite different from himself; duties then have not that savour; Christ shall knock and not be admitted: Tenderness of spirit is in a great measure gone; his prayers are but the image, or carcase, of what they formerly were. Meantime tares are also sown in the vineyard, these spring up instead of the right fruit. Satan, or self, or the world, run away with his heart from duty. Oh! what shall he do? He looks, perhaps, again wishfully; but, like Samson after his locks were cut, knows not that his strength is gone. Time was when the hours run heavily if devotion was not exercised—when the very name of Jesus seemed the music of heaven; it is still the same, but he is dull of hearing. Ah! where am I now! says the Christian—Little wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant: A seal also seems to be put
on

on my treasure in God's word. The intervals of this disease shall be spent in sighing and crying—*Wo is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe fruit*, Micah vii. 1. Here, O Christian! thou wilt be tried: Satan will endeavour, if possible, to winnow all thy grace from thee, and bring thee to give up with duty: Here corruption casts up unthought of—yet shall not a grain fall to the earth: There is no bidding adieu to Christ, no extinguishing the desire. The soul will weep over itself, if it cannot weep after God as it could wish: Ground for humiliation casts up; glory to Christ is prepared; gold under the scum shall not be consumed!

THIRDLY, The Lord's people may often fall under a great withdrawing of the Spirit, as to his comforting, as well as his sanctifying operations. The Spirit does not totally leave a Christian indeed; he will not suffer the grape to be destroyed, because there is a blessing in it; but, as to the more lively and felt effects of the Spirit's influences, he may withdraw: Hence the church complains—*The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me*, Lam. i. 16. All true and Divine joy is from the Spirit; he teaches to cry, Abba, Father—brings home the promises of pardon, &c. gives a view of an interest in the Covenant: Hence we hear of joy in the Holy Ghost: Hence the Psalmist cries, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit*, Psal. li. 12. Of this the Christian shall be for a time deprived. Hence often sad, whence he used to be joyful—be long at Jerusalem's courts without seeing the King's face. In like manner, the sanctifying influences of the Spirit

rit shall seem suspended, or not work as before—barrenness ensues—Satan's scattered forces rally again: Weak and feeble, he is oppress'd and led an easy prey; a baffled temptation prevails—his confidence is dash'd on a sudden—his faith, late triumphant, now with difficulty keeps the field—natural remaining enmity is fretted, and casts up; yea, sometimes corruptions unsuspected appear—he could not have thought there were such spots. Are you not sensible, Christian, it may have been thus with thee? Then the power and hour of darkness—then Satan winnows to the bottom, and, if possible, would pluck up the roots; but in vain. He who began the work saw, and permitted this; he brings good from it—leads to self-loathing—to heart humiliation, and admiration of the riches of grace: Mean-while God prepares to return, comes over mountains, &c. so the enemy is foil'd at all hands; the grain falls not to the earth—the root remains—the Spirit's work is carried on, and Christ's promise fulfilled. Christian, be pleading the promise, that thou mayest come forth from the furnace refined. Mind Satan's design here; resist him, and continue stedfast in the FAITH; be not surpris'd at your fiery trial—hope and fight. But,

FOURTHLY, Another difficult and trying case, under which Christians are brought, is, When the temptations, or suggestions of the enemy, and wrong thoughts of God prevail at the same time. In such a case is the psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. Satan brought him to the brink of apostasy—to entertain harsh thoughts of God, &c. Our ignorance and weakness expose us to our enemy; were he not in chains he would make sad work—every circumstance of God's dealing with us he can misconstruct, and puzzle us with perplexities.

ties. There are seasons when he has advantages for this; when we are remiss, carnal, or unwatchful—then he misrepresents all the Spirit's operations—hides, if possible, the pledge that God had given. When dust is thrown over the mind, the father of lies takes this opportunity to misrepresent God, as he did to our first parents: Is his mercy clean gone?—'Tis in vain to wait any longer—Christ is inaccessible to thee—no balm in Gilead for thee—God has shut up the fountain from thee, O soul! Thus Satan and unbelief concur. A heavy heart it costs the Christian: Can it be true that God has forgotten to be gracious, says he—are his promises not applicable—are they sealed up; then, What am I? Let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices. Christian, sure Satan has sought to winnow thee thus; probably has done so already—alas! has prevailed too far: But shall he succeed altogether? No; Christ will not suffer water to be cast on the smoking coal—Though *I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again towards thy holy temple*, Jonah ii. 4. Satan would bring away the soul from the throne of grace; but a stronger hand draws—some gleam of light from the word shines; he'll follow the track—this, O Christian! thy only safety. Oh! remember all harsh thoughts of God are from Satan. If you cannot reason out the matter, yet take the sword of the Spirit; oppose Christ's call to his calling thee away—God's declaration of mercy to his suggestions—the promises, to temptations to despair—Christ's saying *knock, and it shall be opened*, to his saying the door is shut;—in a word, to the objection can these things be opposed—thus saith the Lord: If he say, Thou art fallen, and shall not arise—say, There is a lifting up; remember he is lifting thee, if such be thy case:

case: Though with difficulty, keep thy faith above; an obstinate resistance this way shall be to the glory of God, and the enemy shall be foil'd. From the furnace, after throwing off the scum, thou shalt come forth as gold. O let me call on you and myself to this exercise! But,

FIFTHLY, Another trying and difficult case, with many a Christian, may be, A great darkness and uncertainty as to their interest in the Covenant. This is frequently the case with the Lord's people, though it has different degrees, Ezek. xxxvii. 10. Through indistinctness, unwatchfulness, untender walking, &c. these blessings are finned away. Satan has great advantage over a poor soul in this condition: It enfeebles it in every part, making the fiery darts take place the more. Satan knows that the joy of the Lord is your strength; and therefore delights to have God's work obscured in the soul: Then he brings home every charge against it—arraigns it sometimes at the bar. The soul would plead, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect*: Satan replying, Thou hast no part or lot there, the poor weak Christian may, in the mean time, be afraid of presumption—then all former attainments pass for delusion: He turns the objection against God's way—there is no certainty in it; the poor soul is thus bewildered. Remember, O Christian, Satan now sifts thee! Wilt thou drop thy adherence to Christ?—wilt thou part with the work of many days? Satan is baffled, in such a case, when the soul cleaves closer to Christ. Is it thy case?—Instead of hanging down the hands, cry, *Judge me, O Lord*, Psal. xxvi. 1. Fly over again to Christ—think well of him in his absence; then thou shalt come forth as

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gold,

gold, and shall receive thy *white stone* brighter than before. But, in the

SIXTH place, Another difficult and trying case, which a Christian may be brought under, is, When his prayers seem to be denied access, and he knows not what answer to make, when his enemies say, *Where is thy God?* Such seems to have been the psalmist's case, Psal. xlii. 10. God sees fit to cover himself with a cloud—the promise tarries; perhaps application is renewed—hope revived; but anon, in time of need, corruption seems to prevail. Here Satan triumphs, sifts the soul fore—here the corn would be lost were it not for the watchful eye; here is a promise long ago pled, and thou thoughtest accepted also—thou trustedst accordingly. Now where is thy God? Here, indeed, is a sticking point: Satan often leads far off our feet here—pretends to contradict the promise by experience—oppose sense to faith; happy he that comes forth as gold here. Even here he shall not prevail—*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God,* Psal. xlii. 11. God will, in a secret way, support the soul—enable, with the vehemence of faith, to give him the lie; or, by the example of holy Job, to say, *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him,* Job xiii. 15. Say, O Christian! *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me,* Mic. vii. 8. If Satan say, Thy bones are dried—answer, Yet they may live. If he say, Why is thy wound not cured?—answer, Still there is Balm in Gilead. If answer to prayer is delayed at thy time; then a better is coming. Remember Simeon and
Anna,

Anna, long waiting for the consolation of Israel; David waiting, and at length obtaining, Psal. xl. 1. If already, O Christian! thou hast, in these instances, kept the FAITH, what reason to rejoice! If the archers shoot at thee now, let thy bow abide in its strength. If thou cannot reason with thine enemy, cry to thy Captain. If thou canst not see any thing appearing for the consolation of thy soul, yet against hope believe in hope. God is spectator of thy combat; yea helps thee, and will at last crown thee with victory! *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X X .

LUKE xxii. 31. 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THE great enemy of our souls is unwearied in his attempts against us. He has many ways of attacking our souls: Sometimes he appears barefaced; but often puts on a mask, then he is perhaps most dangerous. Commonly he keeps wicked men, or professors of the false kind, in his chain by fair words,—persuades them that there is no such evil in sin, or that the mercy of God will, at least, keep them in any event; or lulls them asleep by delays, supplying other matter for their thoughts, and prejudicing them against the gospel. But he attacks the godly also; no wonder—he attacked Christ! Strange lengths he brings them; to question their state—God's way, as to their particular application; he involves them so that they know not where to turn—every thing appears gloomy and dark! In proportion as we know heart exercise, we will be acquainted with his devices.—We have proposed to shew what are the chief Cases of difficulty wherein faints are sifted, and the methods of it. I add now, in the

SEVENTH place, Another difficult case, with a Christian, is, When under trials from the world, of various kinds. The connection we have with the men and the

the things of the world is one of Satan's great handles; hence such contrariety betwixt the spirit of the world and that of the Christian, James iv. 4.—they are crucified to it. Persecution is a trial of this kind; worldly shame and reproach—poverty and want; worldly glare and splendor, and the desire of it. Satan plays off all these to carnalize the heart—to get an idol set up—to bring to diffidence and mistrust—to cast off profession—to think hardly of God, &c. Strive, Christian, against him, and in the strength of promised grace thou shalt prevail.

The following particulars named, but not enlarged on:

EIGHTHLY, Another case of trial and difficulty with a Christian, and whereinto Satan endeavours to bring him, and wherein he sifts him, is, When he feels the prevalence of corruption and unbelief, after they were thought buried and subdued; see Psal, xxx. 7.

NINTHLY, Another circumstance, wherein Christians are much tossed and tried, is, Why they are under perplexity and diffidence about the means of relief, and find disappointments in them; see Luke xxiv. 21. Song iii. Psal. lxxvii. 3—6.

TENTHLY, When in all these they have it to reflect, That their folly has made matters so, Ps. xxxviii. 5. God will not receive thee now, says Satan; and thou darest not ask his assistance, &c.

WE have been endeavouring to lay before you the various circumstances of *Trial* and *Difficulty* wherein to God's people may be brought: Satan's designs upon them; and the improvement of them. They know nothing of religion who are unacquainted with wrestling, &c. and the worst case of Christians is, When grey hairs are growing here and there, and they know it

it not. Then God commonly brings them into some trouble, to awaken them; he sends Nathan to David—if one warning does not succeed, he sends another. As for you who sleep in the arms of destruction, you have reason to tremble; the strong man keeps the house in peace; but your peace has rottenness at the root. You, on the other hand, who are fallen into security while your enemy prevails (though your state is safe), awake, lest ye go mourning to the grave.—What has been said may be improved into the following *Inferences*:

1st, We may learn, That Christians ought not to be altogether discouraged if they are brought into difficulties, and severely attacked by their enemy. It is common to say, Is there any sorrow like mine—the heart knoweth its own bitterness: The Lord's people often fall lower than they could have believed—*O that it were as in months past*; every thing seems hopeless: Were God with me, then why all this evil?—*One day I shall fall by the hand of mine enemy, &c.* If death comes now, what shall I do? Remember, my Brethren, Christ was attacked by your enemy; tempted to distrust and unbelief—to impatience; even to idolatry. The Apostle tells us, That he was tempted in all points like to us, as far as sinless nature would permit: Christ suffered this to glorify his name by a triumph; so he does with respect to you. If Satan attacked where he had nothing; if the prince of this world came against your Lord, what wonder if he attack you also? Christ, indeed, had nothing to be ashamed of; we have, and should be humbled therefore, but not be discouraged, Mic. vii. 8. *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, &c.* While the vileness of our hearts casts up, guilt appears blacker than before,
more

more obstacles seem to stand in the way of our salvation: We should think ourselves vile dust and ashes, and loath ourselves—learn not to look for help from ourselves; but then we should the more admire sovereign grace—grace saving to the uttermost; it is now that the emphasis of that glorious word is known—now that the fulness of Christ appears; this, applied by faith, must be your comfort. Look again towards God's holy Temple; if you seem to be cast further away, yet look again—*I am the resurrection and the life*, says Christ, John xi. 25.; Christ in his power, his promise and grace is so. Apply this to thy case—ask thy unbelieving heart if it can answer this; or see if Satan be able to resist it. But, in the

2d place, From what has been said, We may see how necessary it is to be forewarned of Satan's designs, and to be guarded against them. Security is ruining to the soul, and gives Satan great advantage against us; therefore our Lord let Peter know what was to happen. This improvement you ought to make of what has been discoursed: He will take a handle from your corruption; entice you into sin; endeavour to get you lulled asleep; work into your hearts by degrees; then misrepresent God and the Spirit's work unto you; keep you away from him; train you into more sin, to make a wide breach, and increase the controversy—as in David's case, and as Peter's in the text; tempt you to think God has forgotten you: “What art thou that thou darest to hope, and thinkest so highly of thyself.” Now, my Brethren, his great design is to lead you from God—to say God hath not said so and so, by this you may know his voice; the spirit that discommends Christ, opposes his office, this is Satan. Let him not therefore get an advantage of us; for we are not

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ignorant of his devices, 2 Cor. ii. 11. For want of applying this, many a poor soul for a time mistakes his temptation---thinks God lays a bar in its way. Now, if ye want to find Christ and his grace, break through all opposition, be not afraid, only believe. But, in the

3d place, From what has been said we may see, That, even when God's people are brought into depths, and sifted sore by Satan, there remain some hidden tokens of God's love, and of their relation to him, which they should notice and improve; they are sore afflicted, but not given over, Psal. cxviii. 18. We would see ground of praise in our trials if we perceived this; but commonly this is reserved till they are over---then shall appear footsteps of grace unperceived before---*I was as a beast before thee; yet thou hast holden me by my right hand*, Psal. lxxiii. 22, 23. Hast thou not found this, Christian? Thy foot almost slipping, and God holding thee up---when corruption raged, grace struggled. Sometimes, when unbelief would almost persuade thee to let go thy hold, yet thou wouldst say, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*. Faith's language was almost drowned then, or not understood; yet afterward, Did not thy heart burn within thee? This is the breathing of the soul after God when absent---the earnest look to his holy Temple; this is the language of the new creature. When even become dumb with silence, thy sighs and groans are marked as the expressions of thy heart; God hears his people bemoaning themselves---lamenting over the ruins of their souls; even in this is the new nature expressed. In circumstances such as these, perhaps, grace is as much discovered as in any---Satan sifting in vain. Faith is now in a kind of furnace; if it abides

bides the trial of strong temptations, and the assaults of unbelief, then it is precious. Look at Jonah's case; cast out from God under a sense of guilt, put under a sensible mark of Divine anger: Perhaps his looking towards God's holy Temple was one of the truest acts of faith; it was, indeed, in the boldness of it, far below Paul's, in another case; yet it was precious, and seen by God from on high: Even so, a soul thinking itself forgotten is never the less remembered by God; he smells a sweet favour from it---he puts thy tears in his bottle. Now, this is matter of encouragement in trouble, and should teach us to examine ourselves; maybe gold is to be found under the dross. This is matter of praise to God, who holds up in such difficulties; and of comfort in view of future trials. In the

4th place, From what has been said we may see, That the Lord's people have need to improve the time of his special presence with them. If exposed to temptation; if beset on every side; if trials still abide us, then we have need to turn to good account the precious moments wherein the Sun of righteousness shines. Reflection on these is sometimes a comfort in a dark day; rekindles hope, and puts a kind of argument in the Christian's mouth---*Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord: awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab in pieces, and wounded the dragon? Isa. li. 9. O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar, Psal. xlii. 6.* Now, Christian, when the Lord gives thee nearness unto himself, remember a cloud may follow; press nearer him than ever, say, *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, &c.*; take such hold as shall never quite be loosed, let

Satan do his worst; let the promise be now particularly applied and faith acted with a view to future trouble: "Lord, betrothe me to thee for ever; Lord, take the whole care of my salvation: I know not what I may meet with; I bespeak thine help in time to come—time may come when I shall not be able to seek it; but thou art God, and changeest not." If at any time thou receivest a pledge of his love, commit it to his keeping---thy faithless heart will prove false to thee even in this; and when Satan comes thou mayest be robbed of thy jewel---put it in Christ's hands, and trust him with the application of it in time of need. *In a word*, If God brings thee to near views of him, as in Christ, remember, that whatever changes are in thee, he changeth not: He is seen differently by thee at different times; yet, when thou art lowest, his love and compassion are infinitely above thy highest conception when at the best. In the

5th place, From what has been said we may see, That the Lord's people must resist the attacks of all their enemies by faith in his unchangeable word. This is the art (if I may speak so) of a Christian. Our life is hid with Christ, and derived from him by faith. Natural men perceive not how it is possible to walk by faith when in darkness; yet this is the thing that distinguisheth a saint from others, and the degree of it distinguisheth the strong Christian from the weak; these know what it is against hope to believe in hope, Hence the Apostle, speaking of the Christian warfare, Eph. vi. 12. recommends the shield of faith, ver. 16. so our Lord prays that Peter's faith should not fail. Now, faith resists Satan in his accusations, producing the cry of Christ's blood for mercy, when the cry of guilt is urged: When unworthiness is objected,

jected, then the Christian pleads, "Not for my sake; but for his name's sake:" If the very great danger of thy case, then the power of Christ; if great emptiness and misery, then the fulness of Christ; if his temptations are to lead away from God, then faith is the substance of things unseen: We should answer present danger and trouble with the views of future glory. Thus faith is said to overcome the world; by faith strength is derived from our Head. When grace is low, then application is to be made to the fountain; it is by the prevalency of corruption that Satan triumphs, now faith must repeat its application, and not be discouraged if the promise seems to tarry for a while—when the hands were thus lifted up, the Israelites, you know, were conquerors, fighting with Amaleck. *In a word*, Faith leads the soul, under every pressure, to put itself in Christ's hands, with all its burdens and troubles; when there is nothing seen in self but what disquiets, then it leads to him for rest; it also leads to him for restraint to the enemy: **Many** a time the soul knows not what to answer—is overpowered, then cries to save from deceit and violence. I cannot propose to enlarge on this; but there is a full and ample provision made in the word—to apply it by faith is the method of carrying on the Christian warfare. Take courage then, my dear Brethren, hear the voice of your Leader; Satan trembles at it—even when he *possessed* poor creatures formerly, he was obliged to own Christ's superior power. Thou art weak, but the Most High is on thy side. In the

6th place, From what has been said, We may see what ground saints have to rejoice that there is a time coming, when the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet for ever. Time will be when the Lord's people

people shall apply more than now Psalm lxxiv. 14. *Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness:* Absolute deliverance from sin and temptation is one of the blessings of heaven. Thou that now groanest, being burdened, shall lay down thy body and load at once. Methinks it is sweet to think that part of our combat is over—many of the foe's shafts are spent; he has one more to throw indeed, but he shall not prevail; he has one which perhaps fears thee to think of, *viz.* Death; but Christ will guide this shaft that it hurt thee not—he will end the combat himself; this arrow was shot at Christ, but then he conquered when he fell—What joy! This world is full of sin and sorrow—full of snares! art thou longing to be free of sin? thou shalt be so. I think we should sing of it already—What! never to know sin and Satan more, but as conquered enemies!—"I was once in his chain, but Christ broke it—afterwards deceived by him, but Christ rescued me. There I was on the brink of apostasy; here next to despair—my escape was a miracle: There was I detained a prisoner, being led captive; one like the Son of Man relieved my soul."—What will the saints think! alas! we know but little to tell; but O for the lively faith of this! Then we would rejoice indeed. In the

7th place, See that the trials of God's people are measured out to them in love. It is hard to believe this—God will shew it hereafter: *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,* 1 Cor. x. 13. Fear not then unseen trials, and hope under the present. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XXI.

LUKE xxii. 31. 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THE whole Christian life, my Brethren, is a warfare—enemies from without and within, no truce allowed of; yet the event not uncertain. It will probably be part of the saints work hereafter to look back on their trials, then joyful to know them over. Now to know them useful, and of God's permitting, tends to direct our exercise. I have, for this reason, given some account of the trials, &c. of Christians; and made a pretty large improvement. I now proceed, in the

SECOND Place, *To shew by what means the saints fall into such depths of difficulty and trial; and whence Satan comes to have such advantage against them.*—

We sink often almost imperceptibly—our day overcasts, sin is deceitful in its nature; sovereignty may in part take place here. But I speak of the sinful hand we have in our trials, and the avenues whereby the evil has access. And, in the

FIRST place, One principal cause whereby we fall into depths is, The prevailing of self-confidence—this was Peter's case. We, feeling, perhaps, a gale of divine influences, mistake what is bestowed for our own

own, and think it shall always last—the Sun of righteousness shines, the beasts of prey retire ; hence we turn secure—“ I shall never be moved ; though all men, “ yet not I—I’ll retain what I have got—I will never remit,” &c. The resolution is good, but not well founded—we are not sufficiently sensible of our own weakness ; grace received is but weak—it hath pleased God, that in Christ our fulness should dwell ; the foundation of our faith then is something without us—the person, promise, and fulness of Christ. This is a matter not sufficiently understood even by Christians ; here we are deceived by leaning to a false foundation—God wisely suffers his people to be so, hedging up their way with thorns. Hence also, they come to mistake the means of relief ; they find their hopes and comforts ebb, because from a spring not full : Hence corruption arises again—the man is like Samson, after his locks were cut. Christians, by reflecting on themselves, will often find this to have been the case ; guard, therefore, against the risings of it in the heart. It is our pride, my Brethren, that ruins us—IT is the disease of our nature, and the leaven of Satan remaining.

SECONDLY, Another inlet of much trial and difficulty to Christians, and ground of advantage to Satan, is, Unwatchfulness and remissness on our part. The reflection on this is often bitter to God’s people—*My folly makes it so.* We are told the enemy sows tares while men sleep—*Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour,* 1 Pet. v. 8. We give way to deadness ; slacken duty—not so frequent, not so fervent and spiritual in it as before ; look not to the right end in it : Hence Satan finds room, and the means

means turn lifeless. We seldom look into the state of our own heart; but trust to a peradventure: Hence doubts increase—Satan urges, “Peradventure not so much cause of fear,” &c.; by secret steps he undermines faith under fair pretences;—when admitted in this manner, he has great advantages over us. Christians, you will know this, how, brought back in such manner as surprises, you are often to learn over again what was taught you long ago; yet be not altogether discouraged on this account—be not afraid to look back, Christ has compassion to mend what we have marred; it is wonderful to think how often he must rescue the soul ere it be brought to glory—so much the more praise to his grace. In the

THIRD place, Another ground of much trial and difficulty to Christians, and of advantage that Satan gets against them, is, Their living too much by sense, and too little by faith. We have already shewn that faith resists the attacks of our spiritual enemies; and how. Now, this is a matter that needs to be well considered; for we walk by faith and not by sight. Manifestations of Divine Love to the soul are ground of much comfort; strengthen hope, increase desire, and prepare for heaven; this is often found in duties; God’s presence is felt by its effects—sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker; but not constant—vision is reserved, in perpetuity, for heaven; this, therefore, is not constant food. Now, Christians are taught not to live on this, but on Christ in the word—*Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. Faith teaches to see his glory and grace there, to live on him when hid, to adhere amidst discouragement and darkness; to commit all to him, merely on the faith and trust of what he appears to be there. Christians know some-
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thing

thing of this, and none else can. Now, our natures are averſe from, and ignorant of this way: Hence much harm—we are for crediting only what we feel, and cannot look through a cloud; cannot believe that God is the ſame, cannot balance diſcouragement by his word; hence we are caſt down—*My God has forgotten me*. Satan ſays, “It is ſo indeed.” We cannot ſee directly to the end of our troubles; and therefore ſay, Expectation is cut off. Nothing in us appears giving encouragement to truſt—therefore, the word does not belong to us. God has been long away—therefore, was not with me at all, nor ever will: Theſe are a ſpecimen. Now, if we take our meaſures of God in this manner, what wonder if led into perplexities; Chriſtians feel this, and often know their error: Yet corrupt nature makes them ſtill feel the burden—this leads away from the fountain, leads to miſconſtructions of God, diſarms the ſoul, and ſtrengthens its enemies. Chriſtian, ſee thy error, cry for faith; conſider that by this thou art to live—there is comfort in doing ſo: A pure heavenly reſt is found in this way, when ſenſe is much obſcured; certainly Chriſtians have often found it to be as I ſay—it is for God’s glory it ſhould be ſo. The promiſes are calculated, with infinite wiſdom, for this; all yea and amen—acceſſible through him, taking their ground of application to thee from their relation to him; beſides large and extenſive, exactly ſuited, as it were, to thy caſe. Still, ſuppoſe thee as low, and needful, and undeſerving as thou thinkeſt thyſelf, here lies your comfort—if you know how to apply it. May the Lord teach you to do ſo.

FOURTHLY; Another cauſe why Chriſtians fall into depths, &c. is, The deceitfulneſs of the world. Temptations

tations arise from this quarter more than we are aware of—they steal upon our hearts, and are very various. Perhaps no Christian ever was, or will be without them. Our Lord, knowing the danger his disciples were in on this account, prays, John xvii. 15, 16. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* The remains of a carnal spirit are in us—opposite to the life of grace, enmity to God, and to the operations of the Holy Ghost; leading us to sense, filling our hearts with vanity, and drawing them down to carnal objects: Sad effects are felt from this, deadening the Christian, fixing his bonds. Now Satan has advantage against us this way; the world—its society tends to fix and increase this carnality, its enjoyments feed it, it eats like a canker (according to the Apostle's expression), so it seems to have done with Solomon. I do not here mean only the great and rich, others are exposed in the same way. I called it *deceitful*, it is felt to be so—it attacks us unawares; sometimes with appearance of innocence, the temptation strangely hid; it marring our devout frame, hinders us from hearing the Spirit's motions; in a word, gives an earthy set to our hearts—this we carry to duty; and hence they are tasteless—God is offended, we are disappointed, and Satan triumphs. Think on this, for the Lord's sake! Happy he that fears the contagion, prays against it; and learns to suck honey from the eater, and sweet from the strong. But, in the

FIFTH place, Christians fall into trials and difficulties, and Satan has advantage over them, through the neglect of a frequent examination of the state of matters between God and their souls. There is little ten-

der walking with God in this matter, little communing with our hearts, Psal. iv. 4. We are not concerned, do not strive: Hence breaches are made, and widened; grey hairs are here and there, and we know it not. Few are acquainted with themselves—as to their state, as to their particular case: As to our state, we are not frequent in going to the bottom of the matter, but leave it to another time; hence Christians lose much ground, miss evidences of divine love, and want that joy that is their strength—a strong barrier against temptation is broken down. Meantime Satan musters up difficulties, lays them together, even adds an imaginary strength to them; so that at last the Christian knows not what enemies he has to deal with—hence perplexity. This, I dare say, will be well known to God's people. I own he has his own way of delivering from it; nevertheless, depths are often the consequence of it. Again, there is the neglect of a search into one's particular case—calling the soul to account: "How is the Lord dealing with thee, O my soul; and how art thou dealing with him? When had thou the bright smiles of his countenance? When did he say, *I am thy salvation*? What prayers of thine, and promises of his are now in remembrance before him; or what progress art thou making in the Divine life?" I cannot say enough to make you sensible of the importance of such enquiries as these. Now, while this is neglected, strangeness between God and the soul takes place; deadness encreases, the deceitfulness of sin spreads itself over the soul, and by degrees the Christian knows not where he is; when he awakes (Song v. 6.) Christ has withdrawn—hence he goes mourning many a day. I am persuaded the reality of this has a seal in the experience

ence of many Christians—Improve it, O soul! But, in the

SIXTH and *last* place (not to multiply particulars), Christians fall into depths, &c. and Satan gets advantage against them, through their grieving the Holy Spirit, in all these and many other means. The Holy Ghost, the voluntary agent in Divine operations, never leaves his people absolutely; for this is the bond of union to Christ; yet, as to felt effects, he may for a time withdraw (as shewn above). Now, that there is danger of this the Apostle shews, Eph. iv. 30.; and experience, alas! bears witness to it. It is sin that grieves him—not entertaining suitably his motions, or not improving them. There is a quenching the Spirit—by vain thoughts, carnal conversation, chiefly sins against light. Christ, by his Spirit, knocks at the door of the heart, urges perhaps to duty, and calls to communion—*It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled*, Song v. 2.; the heart is overpowered—hence the Spirit is grieved. Say, Christian, hast thou not found it so—hast thou not found its sad effects! strangeness of heart towards God; guilt and hardness of heart meeting together, so that all is perplexed with thee; many a time, sure, thou art covered with shame on this account. I own it is not surprising that this is the effect, but surprising that God continues to deal with such froward creatures—his ways are past finding out! O to be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God! Eph. iii. 18, 19. I proceed now to the

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THIRD thing proposed, *To shew why the Lord permits his people to fall thus low, and does not prevent their perplexity.* You see Christ knew of Peter's case—foresaw his trial, and knew how far the enemy was to go; yet permitted all. This is a dark step of Divine Providence, and occasions, perhaps, melancholy thoughts to many Christians: "God has forgotten me," say they—"Can he rest in his love; can he look on, and see my foes triumph!" It is one of the hardest exercises of faith to continue trusting and glorifying God on this occasion; therefore, with a practical view, let me offer the following observations:

FIRST, The Lord permits his people to fall into perplexities, wherein Satan sifts them, &c. in order to raise up, in every Christian's case and experience, many lasting monuments of his great grace. They are people whom he chuses for himself, to shew forth the praises of his name; to all eternity they are to do this. Now, it is necessary that they be long a polishing to be stones in his everlasting temple. You see the wonders of Christ's grace are recorded in heaven—*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, Rev. v. 12. vii. 10.* Now, all God's dealings tend to this blessed period: The election, the conquest, and the many redemptions gradually accomplish it; the lower a sinner is brought, the greater this glory. He who was *afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, Isa. liv. 11.* having his sorrow turned into joy here—his tears wiped away hereafter, he is a monument of Christ's compassion! he who, after God seems to have forgotten him, has
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covenant remembered, he is an evidence of his faithfulness to his trust! If the Lord has left thee, and thou hast gone on frowardly, and he has seen and healed, Isa. lvii. 18.—What evidence of sovereignty is this! God never turns away from his own not to return; and when he does return it is *life from the dead*—it is a miracle of mercy, and will be celebrated as such. See Peter's case; how low fallen!—seemingly lost, guilt and shame cover him; but Christ shews a particular regard to him—Go and tell Peter, him who denied me; he will need a word from myself to comfort him—Transcendent love! O Jesus, how wonderful art thou! Every thought of thine is amazing!—it is divine love this indeed!—not to be conceived, and never equalled. Let this comfort thee, O Christian! teach thee to think well of thy God, and to rebuke thy unbelief.

The following Observation and Inferences not enlarged in the manuscript copy.

SECONDLY, The Lord permits his people to fall into perplexities, &c. in order to correct and chastise them for their folly and vanity—*For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*, Heb. ii. 10. *If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes*, Psal. lxxxix. 31, 32.

THIRDLY, In order to make the Lord's work more distinct, and to make it appear to be from God.

FOURTHLY, To draw out the exercise of their graces in a variety of circumstances.

FIFTHLY,

FIFTHLY, To teach them humility, that shining grace of the Christian life.

INFERENCES.

1st, Let it be our study, in every case, to think well and justly of God and his dealings.

2^{dly}, Let us see that there is love and grace in every cup our heavenly Father puts in our hand.

SERMON

SERMON XXII.

LUKE xxii. 31. 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

WE have already been viewing the Christian in the dark side of his case, tempted by Satan—plunged in depths; in such a case as almost to despair of the event. So low, indeed, that we might say (were it possible to deceive the elect), he was lost. Perhaps thou, Christian, hast been wondering if, in such a case, it was possible to emerge; if Christ would take any concern in thee! See, thou hast a friend that sticks closer than a brother; one whose love many waters cannot quench—one whose care of thee has been exerted when thou knewest it not, and when thou couldst not thank him—*I have prayed for thee*, says our Lord to Peter. Methinks Christ's voice, which is always sweet, is here inexpressibly so. If understood aright, it would raise our hearts to the most exalted gratitude—the most lively faith; and teach us to triumph over our enemies: “O Satan, where is thy power—O sin where is thy victory!” To promote in you and myself these sentiments, let us proceed to the

FOURTH HEAD proposed; namely, *To open and illustrate the nature, the end, and particular applica-*

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tion of Christ's Intercession for his people in every one of their difficulties. While I call you to the faith's view of Jesus, now exalted, let your hearts be upwards, &c. Here, for distinctness, let me, through Divine assistance,

1st, Shew you the nature, with some of the circumstances and properties of this Intercession.

2^{dly}, The Effects of it with respect to the Lord's people, particularly in their various trials; or, which is the same thing, shew what is interceded or prayed for.

3^{dly}, Prove and illustrate the Interest every particular Christian has in it.

WITH respect to the FIRST, I observe, That the Lord Christ was invested with the office of an *Advocate* and *Intercessor* for his people: It was a part of his undertaking from eternity. He is said to be called of God to be a *Priest*, Heb. v. 10. He is no usurper of his office, Heb. v. 4. Yea we are told that he was inaugurate into his office with the solemnity of an oath, Heb. vii. 20. From this follows the validity of all his priestly acts, and of his intercession particularly: Hence they must necessarily be accepted—hence also, fidelity to his office requires that he pray for his people; so sure has God laid the foundation of our hopes. We are to view Christ, therefore, in this matter, as fulfilling his undertaking—doing what is agreeable to the Father, and cannot but be accepted of him. It was inconsistent with the holiness of God to admit us into his presence till perfected: But our interest must not be neglected; therefore he is an Advocate and Intercessor for us. Now, poor soul, wouldst thou fain have a request presented in heaven—Behold
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this High Priest! Art thou afraid he will not undertake it?—Consider it is his office; he loves the employment, and complains that we ask little, or nothing in his name—Consider, it is as if he reasoned thus with you: “Why have I undertaken the office of Intercessor? Why have I put on these Priestly Garments? Why have I offered myself to thee? For whom should I make intercession but transgressors!” &c. In a word, God has solemnly declared his acceptance of him under this character; and says, *See not my face except your Brother is with you*, Gen. xliii. 3. In the

SECOND place, The Lord Christ is in all respects qualified for this high and important office; and, particularly, has a perfect knowledge of all the circumstances of his people, and has all their concerns on his heart. He alone was found in heaven or earth who could, or durst appear for us: The flames of devouring justice had consumed any other. He ever lives to make intercession. This shepherd and watchman slumbers not nor sleeps—He knows what we need, and keeps an eye upon us through our whole journey heaven-ward. Are we ready to enter upon any dreary path?—he foresees and provides against it. Is Satan making ready to assault us?—HE is always before hand with him. Do our foolish hearts make a request unfit for us?—HIS perfect knowledge then makes up for our ignorance, and procures for us what we need; not what we ask. The High Priest, under the Law, could not know all the wants of the people, much less the circumstances of each. It is otherwise with Christ—he counts the number of the stars; this was represented by the High Priest, under the Law, who had the names of the twelve tribes on his shoulders

ders and his breast, Exod. xxviii. 9.—xv. 29; ; but perhaps thou mayest fear thy concerns are forgotten by him. Nay; we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities—he has made thy interest his; he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. One would think that Peter might have been forgot; he was going to deny his Master, and go quite in opposition to the precepts he had but lately taught him: So my folly, &c. says the Christian, shall make him cut me off. Nay; he beholds even thy straying heart—his anger is mixed with pity; he sets his people as a seal on his heart, and what shall erase them from thence—*Who shall separate from the love of Christ?* Rom. viii. 35. Shall more important concerns make thee be forgotten? No; are thy concerns too trifling?—the hairs of your head are numbered—God's thoughts are not as ours; judge of him by what he has already shown—with desire waited he for the time of shewing his love to thee. Such, then, are his thoughts and prayers for his people: “Father, I see such an one ready to be tempted—let him not utterly fall; such an one in danger from the world—keep him from its evil; another broken in heart—let his wounds be bound up; can he bleed and I not feel!” (with reverence be it said). In a word, His watchful eye takes in all the circumstances of his people—his concern is extended to the whole: *O the height and the depth of the love of Christ!*—we are lost in such an ocean!

THIRDLY, As the Lord Christ perfectly knows, so he continually presents the cases of his people, in all the variety of their circumstances, and also their prayers with respect thereto, before God. Thus our Lord, John xvii. 11. —*These are in the world, &c.* Christ

was

was now about to go to his Father. He considered the circumstances of his disciples; they are exposed to snares—are hated, yet weak in grace and unable to strive; are in an enemy's country, and daily exposed to his attacks: Perhaps with respect to this, he said to Peter, "I have been praying for thee," &c. Now, this is a pattern of his intercession in heaven: His character is, to lead his flock like a shepherd—tenderly; to consider all his people's wants and weaknesses—and thus he does it. We are so unacquainted with the compassionate grace of the Redeemer, that we doubt this. We think him such an one as ourselves, but here we greatly err. Christ deals with us as with Nathanael, John i. 47, 48.: When he called him by name, he could not think he knew him: Nay, I saw thee when under the fig-tree; so, Christian, he has noticed thee when thou knewest not. When yet thou wast afar off, he said, "Behold one, with respect to whom it was promised by thee, That the Spirit should be poured out on him, Isa. xlv. 3.—he is now wandering a prodigal in the far country. Such an one dry and withered, and the things that remain ready to die—I came that he might have life. Such an one entering on hard and important work, and like to sink under it—I promised to be with him to the end. Such an one near to a struggle with the king of terrors; his heart trembles, afraid of the issue; lo, the waters of Jordan are like to overwhelm him—I promised to be with him." A pattern and emblem of all this you have, Zech. i. 12, 13. *Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered*

answered the angel that talked with me, with good words, and comfortable words. It is evident that the Lord Christ is the angel mentioned there—the angels come and give an account to him. Again, As Christ presents the case of the saints thus, so also their prayers in relation thereto. He gives them a spirit of grace and supplication, which suggests their prayers, confessions, praises, complaints, and requests; but, alas! we have unclean lips—will God hear the prayers of such sinners? Christ presents these—he was seen in vision, at the altar, by John, executing this office, Rev. viii. 3, 4. Thus the feeble indistinct cry of the babe in grace misses not the way; nor is the faltering speech of a heart-broken Christian intercepted; yea, the groans of him whose lips are almost closed are understood: Hence believing prayers do not vanish into air, but are said to come in remembrance—so, after many days they are visited, Isa. xxiv. 22. Hence also, there is experience of immediate access to the throne—while yet speaking he hears; this is the effect of Christ's praying.

FOURTHLY, The Lord Christ continually presents the efficacy and merit of his precious blood, with a particular view to his people. In these does his intercession properly consist. Having purged away our sins, he *sat down on the right hand of God*, Heb. x. 12. hence he is said to appear there for us—his appearance there in his crucified body is an argument. This was prefigured by the High Priest of old, Heb. ix. 7. God's presence is confined, indeed, to no place; but his glory is especially manifested in the highest heavens, where Christ is. There, then, he presents that body, wounded for our transgressions. Perhaps the scars, visible after his resurrection, may still remain; hence
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the posture he is seen in is, *a Lamb as it had been slain*, Rev. v. 6. This has a powerful, though silent language! God looks on it, and smells a sweet savour; righteousness looks down from heaven, while the truth that springs from earth has risen, and filled heaven with its fragrance! Hence Christ is compared to the rainbow about the throne, Rev. iv. 3. You remember its original signification—a token of God's covenant with man, Gen. xii. 15. What powerful language has this blood! It speaks contrary to that of Abel, Heb. xii. 24. Whether there be any vocal intercession or not, sure this is heard; blood cries from the ground, though but of a man—What will that blood do that is called *God's*? Christian, this moment, when I speak to you in Christ's name, HIS BLOOD speaks in heaven—happy if we are admitted to hear it for ourselves. Mercy, mercy, is its voice! Peace on earth—love to men; and God, the Judge of all, says amen to it! Angels and saints catch the sound, and sing hosannas to the ever-living Jesus! Saints on earth have the sound conveyed to them by the Holy Ghost—praise to Grace is repeated in every heart; drooping souls revive at the sound—cry for mercy, and cry not in vain, while this blood speaks the same language!—Ah, poor soul that knows nothing of this matter! but happy thou, whose ears hear indeed—whose heart echos it back to heaven. But Again, Christ presents this blood with a particular view to his people—no uncertain sound here. When on earth, he pointed out the particular persons he prayed for, John xvii. 9.; so in heaven—*I have prayed for thee*. Blessings were purchased for the Christian by this blood—Christ's intention is the measure of the prayer: “Father, for their sakes I sanctified myself;” “for this praying soul was mine offered; for this poor
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"destitute one; for that other dying saint: There-
 fore, *I will that they also may be with me, that they
 may behold my glory which thou hast given me,*" John
 xvii. 24. Thus far we have ventured within the vail;
 but Christ, I trust, has led the way. What I have
 said is according to scripture. O to see these myste-
 ries more clearly! May the soul of thy servant feel
 them, O Lord!—Amen. But, in the

FIFTH place, The text leads us to observe particu-
 larly, That these prayers of the Lord Christ for his
 people are always seasonable. Peter was just entering
 on an unseen snare, and Satan going to have an ad-
 vantage over him; therefore, *I have prayed for thee.*
 So, Christian, thou hast unforeseen difficult steps in thy
 way; but thy Lord cannot be surprised. Thou, in-
 deed, may be surprised, and off thy guard; but not
 without a suitable provision made for thee elsewhere.
 This is wonderful grace in our Redeemer, and might
 lead us to think, were our ears open, we should hear
 petitions granted for us unknown to ourselves—the
 mountain full of flaming ministers, as was Elisha's case.
 What a source of joy is here! We are poor short-sight-
 ed creatures; but our times and mercies are in Christ's
 hands. How boldly may we go on, and follow Christ,
 even through paths unknown!—provision is made for
 every step. How rich may Christians see themselves
 with God!—prayers are laid up in store for them.
 Death itself shall not find them unprovided of help in
 the Lord Christ. Such be my case, O Lord, in every
 step of life; and in death itself let me find, that Christ
 has been praying for me! *Amen.*

SERMON XXIII.

LUKE xxii. 31. 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THERE is perhaps no doctrine in the gospel fuller of joy to Christians, in a militant state, than that of Christ's Intercession; none that more sets forth his ever-constant love, the fulness of their security, and the certainty of their final blessedness—it has an evident connection with their joy, as our Lord tells us, John xvii. 13. It ought to have a great influence on their faith and boldness, Heb. x. 21, 22.; and also on all the acts of an holy obedience, particularly the fervency, frequency, and closeness of their prayers. I desire it may be understood, that I do not treat this as a mere speculative matter; if you view it so you lose its spirit and use. The object of faith, then, my Brethren, is of great extent; not only Christ in his living and dying, but also as at the Father's right hand—happy for you and me were our views led thither, happy if not seeing we yet believe—it would bring something of heaven to earth; it would raise us, by a native flame, back to heaven again.—I was last occasion shewing you the nature, end, and circumstances of Christ's Intercession. I now proceed to observe, in the

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SIXTH

SIXTH place, That the Intercession of Christ for his people corresponds to that solemn act of the High Priest under the Law; namely, a blessing of the people. This you see Aaron did, Lev. ix. 22.: In the same manner, Christ, having all power in heaven and in earth given to him, his prayers have the force of, and solemnly signify blessing. The weakness of our understanding prevents our conceiving of this aright. Our prayers are often mistaken by us, and wrong used through ignorance.—Christ's cannot be so; they are an expression of his design to bestow what he sees necessary. We are not to think that he cannot, or must not give without asking, &c. It is a noble idea the scripture gives of Christ—delighting to bless his people, living and dying he does this; when just going within the vail, he lift up his hands to bless them, Luke xxiv. 50. to let them see what he was going to do, and for what ends his hands were to be lifted up in heaven; he did it to pronounce and command the blessing upon them, as the representatives of his people. Glorious sight! happy eyes that saw it! blessed also they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Let my part be in it, O blessed Jesus!

SEVENTHLY, This Intercession of the Lord Christ for his children is continual and uninterrupted. He who carries it on is the eternal God, who faints not, neither is weary; he can at once take in the different circumstances of all his people—his acts are not, like those of men, confined by limited faculties; we can only consider one thing at once—not so with God. Thou hast then no reason, O Christian! to fear thy case, in this respect, should be like that of the Israelites, when fighting with Amalek; while Moses held up his hands they prevailed, but he could not do
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it always—therefore they were worsted. Aaron went but once a-year into the holy of holies, and put off his vestments when he came forth; but Christ continues there evermore, and never puts off his vestments. The eye of God is still towards him; he was his delight from eternity, and is so still—he always beholds in him a pledge of his relation to thee, in his human nature; he always beholds the marks of his love to thee, strong as death; always sees the concern he has for thee in particular, as thou art set like an indelible seal on his heart. Thus, though thou art far from thy Father's house, thou art seen and known there by name, in the most advantageous circumstances: Hence David, Psal. lxxxiv. 9. *Look on the face of thine anointed.* Thus you see Christ's Intercession is continual, and how it is so. Yet it is not only continual in this respect, but in the constant remembrance Christ has of you. A mother may forget her sucking child, a shepherd may slumber and sleep; but thus saith Christ of his people, thy walls are continually before me. This is very strange; but it is the doing of the Lord, and wonderful in our eyes—How adorable, how admirable are thy ways, O God!

EIGHTHLY, The Intercession of the Lord Christ for his people, both as to the undertaking and execution of it in all its parts, is founded upon sovereign free love, and the interest he has in them as their covenant head and representative. This, I imagine, deserves special notice, in regard that it illustrates all the other observations. There is an obvious intimation of this in the text, considered as connected with the account of Peter's case. God foresaw his circumstances, and the seeds of that corruption that soon broke out; our Lord had even present in his eye the whole of his denials. In these

circumstances he prays for him. Does he say, he is unworthy of my care? I'll give him up; his heart is almost a temple for Satan—therefore let him perish for ever. No; this is agreeable to God's method of dealing with his people: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with everlasting kindness have I drawn thee*, Jer. xxxi. 3. From this springs all his care of them—here rise the promises, here dawns eternal glory. Alas! where should we find a foundation for such a privilege in ourselves?—We are poor, forlorn, and sunk to the lowest in misery. How, then, should our misgiving hearts aspire so high? Durst we think that we were thus remembered by God; that Christ took such knowledge of us? Accordingly, God, after enumerating the privileges of his people, bottoms them here, Ezek. xxxvi. 32. *Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.* It is a faith's view of this that silences and satisfies the heart, reconciles to the whole scheme of grace, and leads a poor humbled soul to rest, that can find nothing in itself to bottom its trust on—it is particularly applicable here. The thought, perhaps, almost swallows thee up, poor soul, —*How shall I be put among the children?* Jer. iii. 19; I dare not lay claim to such a privilege. Instead of praying for me, I may expect he should plead against me. Nay, but view Christ's praying for his people, &c. as one of the streams flowing from this eternal fountain—its spring is in God himself; it is a part of the scheme for glorifying the Lord Christ—a method whereby a revenue of praise is brought to him. Then fall down and adore—*Just and holy are thy ways, O Lord—thy thoughts are above ours, as the heavens are*
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above the earth. Yea further, Consider Christ's praying and interceding as a fulfilling his trust. God gave his elect to him, to be saved by him; he makes express mention of this in his intercessory prayer, John xvii. 9.; he takes this charge of them for that particular reason. Love to the Father, RELATION TO THESE, and his love to them also—all this engages him in their interest; thus made sure to the heirs of promise. Rejoice in this, O Christian! let thy hands be strong—fear not to plead with God for thyself; *put him in remembrance* of what he has told you, &c.

NINTHLY, Let it be observed, That the present Intercession of Jesus Christ is performed in a manner suitable to the dignity and glory of the great Intercessor. As to the substance, end, and design, it is the same as here; but, no doubt, the manner is different,—little can we conceive of heavenly things unutterable! How incapable, alas, of reaching, even in conception, the exalted glory of Christ!—the armies of heaven are following him. It is certain Christ can no more weep over Jerusalem—no more groan in spirit at Lazarus' grave. See Heb. v. 7. Tears are wiped away from every face in heaven, much more from his. It is meet indeed it should be so; but though Christ's praying for his people be thus different, there is no ground for grief on that account; he rests in his love—he feels for them as far as his present glory permits. So far from losing in this respect, it was expedient for you that he should go away. All the sentiments of pity and compassion expressed in his earthly intercessions, appear in another form in heaven. His interceding is now carried on with unspeakable majesty and glory—with the authority of one who has all things committed to him. In the pattern of his heavenly Intercession

cession he sets out on this, John xvii. 2.: But who shall declare his glory! The most enlightened eye, even that of faith, takes in but a small part of it. Here we must be silent; the rest is wonder and adoration! In the

TENTH and *last* place, The Intercession of the Lord Christ, for his people, is carried on with a view to the Glory of God in them. Every part of it tends this way, and is regulated by this view. Hence Christ does not pray, that his people may be taken out of the world, for obvious reasons—God has some great ends to answer with every one of his people; none of us liveth, or dieth to himself. Hence our foolish prayers, flowing from ignorance, are not answered—hence our hope is deferred—hence Christians sometimes think they are forgotten: But the unerring Judge of what is best, knows what will glorify himself and his Father, by denying us our will, by leading us, through paths unknown, to the great end of our faith—even the salvation of our souls. Lead me! O lead me by the hand, O Jesus!—Glorify thy name in me, and teach me to glorify thee.—Into thy hands I commit my spirit, Lord God of truth! *Amen.*

S E R M O N XXIV.

LUKE xxii. 31. 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

WE have already, my Brethren, been representing to you something of the Nature and Circumstances of Christ's Intercession—entering within the vail—following, nevertheless, him who is truth itself. I would fain hope the view may be useful for raising your souls to admiring thoughts of Christ—teach those whose thoughts of him are cold and languid, to love and adore—those that are doubtful, to believe; and these that are concerned for their souls, to put them in his hands. I hope, and wish also, it may teach those who have been led by the hand to know who has healed them, Hof. ii. 3. I am now, as I proposed, in the

SECOND place, on this head, *To endeavour to shew you what are the effects of Christ's Intercession for his people, or what he prays for concerning them*; particularly when they are under trials of such a kind as I formerly mentioned. In the

FIRST place, Observe, That the object of Christ's Intercession must be of the same extent as the design of his dying—his Intercession is founded on his sacrifice; it is the actual application of the merit of it. He died for his Elect, not for others; so for them he prays,

prays, not for others: He died that they might have life—life spiritual and eternal; for this he prays for them. All the parts of salvation, from beginning to end, are the fruits of his purchase; the vital quickening Spirit could not be communicated without this: By Christ's Intercession it is sent in due time. The destined moment for beginning the work is waited for by Christ—the Spirit is then sent accordingly. Pardon is purchased by Christ's blood; accordingly he prays for it, and for the sealing of it to his saints. Perhaps it might, among other things, be with a view to those afterwards converted by Peter's sermon, that he prayed, when dying, *Father, forgive them*, Luke xxiii. 34.: That Christ's Intercession is a security against condemnation—*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 34. Did Christ die to bring us to God and his favour?—he prays for the same thing—*Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me*, John xvii. 24. In a word, As by Christ's death all things were purchased to be ours—by his Intercession they actually become so: Neither things present nor things to come are forgot. We have this, then, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast in every respect; that in troubles he will revive us; that our wants shall be supplied, our bread given, and our water sure; that all things shall work together for our good; and that sin shall not have dominion over us. *Finally*, That we shall die unto the Lord, and be received into glory. Thus in every thing we are commanded to make our requests known unto God by supplication—in every thing

thing we have his all-powerful requests to help our imperfect ones ; thus, because he lives we shall live also. View then, Christian, every mercy under this peculiar advantage ; every drop of Divine consolation has a seal of Christ's concern for thee on it ; read his name and office, as exprest in legible characters, in what has past in thy soul!

SECONDLY, But, to consider the effects of Christ's Intercession more particularly, or what he prays for to thee under thy trials, observe, That in consequence of it grace is preserved in its root, and the tempted Christian kept from apostasy—*I have prayed* (says he), *that thy faith fail not*. He does not always pray that we be not tempted—that our enemy shall in no degree prevail over us, nor corruption lay us low. Were this the case, who could claim the character of a Christian? Does not experience teach?—does not the example of God's servant shew how the enemy may pursue the soul?—*For the enemy hath persecuted my soul: he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead*, Psal. cxliii. 3.; faith hardly able to keep above water; heart-enmity breaking out; ashamed to look up to God; bars almost insuperable seeming to lie in the way. Are not Christians brought thus low? This Christ permits: But will he leave them in their enemy's hand? No. The Christian may be brought to say, Has God forgotten to be gracious? but he shall quickly recover himself—*Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High*, Psal. lxxvii. 9. 10. Christians are often made to wonder what holds them up, and how

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dying grace revives. When every view is melancholy and dismal, he does not know what answer to make to his enemies—God seems to have dismissed him also; sure, might he think, Satan shall lead me captive now. Whence is it that he will still be looking back; whence does he sigh to God when he cannot speak to him? Does it not seem strange, that, under such discouragements, he will still be keeping his hold; expressing, by a wishful look, what his closed lips cannot utter? Whence is it, that though God be unseen, yet hard thoughts of him, when he cannot answer them, shall yet be such a burden? Whence is it, that in a struggle between sense of guilt and the Divine Holiness, when unbelief says the hardest things, he will justify God, and abhor himself? All this arises from the secret hand that feeds and leads—he prays that faith fail not: Hence the Christian is enabled to make a stand, sometimes he knows not how; spiritual food is cut out for him, like the stone from the mountain, without hands; and God's word brought seasonably to remembrance, as an apt cure for what was thought incurable. How would it comfort thee, Christian, if thou knewest what prayers Christ puts up for thee this way, and heard thyself remembered before the altar when thou hast nothing in thyself deserving such notice! Wouldst thou not think Christ's love past understanding! Why? Faith may even lead us to hear almost something of this, and sense may make us also feel it. What is Christ's prayer for thee in this case but the echo, as it were, of the promise—the promises are made to him for thee; look over these; these are Heaven's language; these are the comfortable words (Zech. i. 13.) spoke to the interceding Angel of the Covenant—*And the Redeemer shall come*

to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever, Isa. lix. 20, 21.

A promise is made to Christ, with a particular view to his people—hear Christ praying, *Father, keep them through thy name, &c.* Learn here what to answer to thy unbelieving heart, when suggesting difficulties from thy weakness: Dost thou fear its deceitfulness? Dost thou fear that thy light be sometime swallowed up in gross darkness? Art thou afraid to say, I am the Lord's, because thou cannot keep thy word? lay thy help here; trust not thyself, but Christ; engage with him in this view, and on these terms, to be kept by him—*Into thy hands I commit my spirit*, Psal. xxxi. 5.: But here, perhaps, some dear to God may object against themselves—"If it be true that Christ's Intercession always keeps grace alive in a Christian's heart, then I fear I am no Christian; for sometimes I think I hardly feel a vestige of it remaining; hence I conclude that I am none of his sheep," &c. Answer, Perhaps God may see grace when thou see'st none. Many cannot distinguish between strong grace and weak, nor perceive its acting unless when lively. Hast thou not, when the Spirit brought all things to thy remembrance, found thou wast not forsaken when thou thought'st so? the fire burning under the ashes; grace expressed in breathing desire; in lamenting after God—over thyself; faith leading thee to look again, when thou could'st not boldly hope. In many instances things of this kind are better felt than exprest. God

sees his own work, and from a grain of mustard seed raises a tree bearing fair fruit. But,

THIRDLY, As the Intercession of Christ preserves grace alive in its root, and keeps from apostasy, so from this also flows a reviving of its exercise, and renewed discoveries of the glory of God. Christ's prayers are the hidden spring of a Christian life; as grace is heaven-born, its nourishment is from above; this was the spring of these tears of godly sorrow that Peter shed—this stirred up David to his penitent acknowledgment and fervent prayer; there is not one act of grace but flows thus from Christ—he begins faith and finishes it. Thus he prays, John xvii. 17. *Sanctify them through thy truth*; he sees them labouring under many difficulties—weighed down by corruption; he feels for them, and commands deliverance; these voluntary discoveries which the Spirit makes of God's glory flow from this; they that dwell under his shadow shall return. Thou hast, perhaps, found thy heart such a bitter fountain that thou couldst expect no good from it; but thou found God where not expected—see and acknowledge that he has not forgot thee. Grace in the soul glorifies Christ; it is his image, and he delights to behold it; it is a first-fruits of his purchase reaped—therefore he supplies it: He found thee poor and wretched at first, yet loved thee: He will not then, sure, forsake thee after he has begun his work. His death put sin to death; sure then, thou wilt be made to live through his life! Despair not under thy burden, Christian—Christ's prayers that could ascend from earth to heaven, will, in their effects, descend back to earth—Look up where he is, and thou shalt be lightened. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XXV.

LUKE xxii. 31. 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

AFTER interruptions of various kinds, I now return to this delightful subject. The Doctrine proposed to be insisted on is so extensive, that our meditations on it may still be useful ; if, in this valley of darkness, we can draw aside the vail—ascend to the eternal springs of a Christian life, and see, by faith, Jesus ministering at the altar within the vail : How great our joy ! Every part of God's dealing with us should be improved to lead us to himself ; his work of grace is all wonderful. It is therefore proposed, to shew the actual effects or design of Christ's Intercession for his people, that Christians may see his hand about them and give him the glory, and may steadfastly hope for the future. I proceed now to add, in the

FOURTH place, Another effect of Christ's Intercession for his people, especially in time of trial, is, The restraint of the tempter, so that he cannot enlarge it beyond the appointed limit. Were the powers of darkness let loose on a Christian, they would make dreadful havock ; they have much advantage against us—God knows how far it is necessary for it to go, and short of this it shall not stop ; but farther it shall not

go. Christ beholds when going through fire and water; he is near when his disciples know not it is he—not merely a spectator, but interested; his glory is concerned in the preservation; he suffers, perhaps, the extremity to come to the last push; but then interposes: Hence Christians sometimes find, after they have fought long with temptation in vain, another interposes, rebukes the enemy, and commands the storm into a calm. Christ would not pray that his disciples should be taken out of the world, but kept from its evil. Look around thee, Christian—hast thou ever met with this? Has it not been said concerning thy trials, hitherto shalt thou come and no further? What unerring hand was near!—not an enemy, but a friend has done this!

FIFTHLY, Another effect of Christ's Intercession for his people in their trials is, That they bear fruit to the glory of God. A corrupt heart, left to itself, will only vent its corruption by trials; depths of wickedness will be stirred up; such would be the case with Christians, were there not a Judge and a Refiner in Israel; he watches over them in the furnace, and makes all the advantages Satan gets over them turn to their account at last, either by letting them see the necessity of living near God, or making them better acquainted with Satan's devices; thus the depths that look most desperate like have a gracious issue. The question is resolved, Why did Christ permit his children to be so tried? &c. A fund is laid up for everlasting joy and praise! Thus far as to the effects of Christ's Intercession.—I did not propose to treat this matter in all its extent, but confine myself to that view of it which the text presents to us. I shall now proceed to what was proposed on this head

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, *To prove and illustrate the interest that every Christian has in this Intercession, and the benefit of it.* The general truth will not be doubted. The particular application is not so easy. What is proposed is, To lead you into suitable views of it in the following particulars,

FIRST, Consider if thou art among the least of Christ's little ones—then thou art a member of his body; and therefore must be particularly noticed by him. A Christian is a wonder, a son of earth, and a son of heaven! Thou art perhaps despised, and lookest on thyself as nothing; yet Christ loves thee, owns thee as his, and gives thee the seal of redemption; his general assembly of the first-born will not be completed without thee; not a hoof is he to leave in the land of Egypt. Now, unworthy as thou art, Canst thou be forgotten? No—Has he taken thee so near himself, and will he not care for thee? while his Intercession is made in heaven he has thee before him; thy name and case are on his heart. No man ever hated or forgot his own flesh; but he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

SECONDLY, The special circumstances of any one Christian, as to trial, difficulty, or distress, make him the special object of Christ's notice. See the parable of the lost sheep. His character is, *He shall lead his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young*, Isa. xl. 11. If, therefore, thy temptations are great, the power of thy enemy prevailing—if Satan is like to get the dominion over thee, Christian, then particular notice is taken of thee in Christ's prayer: You see this concerning Peter in the text. All the disciples were sought by Satan, but his case was peculiar; the enemy went further with him, and had more success—*Therefore I have prayed for*

for thee by name. Unbelief will suggest other thoughts of Christ, but this is agreeable to his method of proceeding. Art thou overwhelmed with darkness and doubts? believe it, Christ takes special notice of thee. Art thou like to be held captive? then he prays that thy faith fail not. Art thou entering upon trial? then he is preparing help for thee before-hand.

THIRDLY, Every particular Christian has security laid up for him, in virtue of the Covenant of promise. This privilege is one of the sure mercies of David—a part of Christ's Priestly character; it is necessary also in order to implement the rest of the promises: Therefore thou mayest plead it as thy right; thou mayest be assured God will remember it, for he will not deny himself.—When joined to Christ in a perpetual covenant, by what means wast thou to stand? What didst thou trust to? What was to keep thee through faith to salvation? Didst thou not get this as the anchor of thy soul? then plead it and depend upon it.

FOURTHLY, Look to former evidence and experience of undeserved and preventing grace, and see if thou hast not a witness in thyself confirming the matter—thy foot almost slipping, and mercy holding thee up; ere thou wast aware thy soul was as the chariots of Aminadab; refreshing grace vouchsafed after long delay and much unworthiness.—*Objection*, “I am so mean and vile I cannot expect such notice. *Answer*, This flows from unworthy thoughts of God.—*Objection* 2. “But I have provoked him to his face. *Answer*, The more needy thou art of Christ's Intercession.—*Objection* 3. “I have waited so long in vain that mine eyes fail with looking up, and certainly “Christ has not prayed for me.” *Answer*, He will procure for you every blessing in its season. *Amen*.

SERMON

S E R M O N XXVI.

LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THE Doctrine contained in the text is of so great extent, that, after turning it on all its sides, we shall not be able to exhaust it. I hope its near connection with the Christian life will make it dear to Christians. Our daily sins and infirmities daily need application to this Advocate : Our cold prayers need him to set them forward, and present them as incense : Our closed lips, unable to make language of our case, need one who is always heard, who, feeling our infirmities, can heal them. In a word, In Christ is the supply of all our wants : His office, character, and grace are set before us to direct our faith. With this view, I have endeavoured, on the last head, to open the nature and properties, the end and application of Christ's Intercession ; also the particular interest that every Christian has in it—That I may hasten to some general improvement of the subject, I shall very shortly discuss the

FIFTH HEAD proposed ; namely, *To prove and illustrate the efficacy of Christ's Praying, or Intercession for his people.* That his prayers must be effectual, will perhaps be easily allowed. It is not the proof, then,

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of a speculative point that I undertake, but the illustrating a practical known truth—to make it felt and trusted, viewing it in the Divine light. Take notice, the usefulness of this part of the subject best appears by comparing it with what went before. Observe, then,

FIRST, The peculiar glory and dignity of the Great Intercessor, and the satisfaction and delight of the Father in him, evidence and illustrate the prevalent efficacy of his Intercession. God had respect to the pleadings of Abraham, Elijah, &c.; he condescends to notice the very sighs and tears of his servants! What then will he do with those of his own Son?—Consider his excellency as the Eternal God, the first and the last; without robbery equal to God. Angelical intercession, though united in the voices of the whole heavenly host, were yet no more than that of creatures; but this comes from the Lord of angels, and the Eternal Wisdom of God: Hence an inexpressible value is stamped on it. Consider further his glory as Mediator, at God's right hand, in the midst of the throne (for there he intercedes). In this respect his name is *Wonderful*—the very wonder of Heaven! he who has done the Father's will—restored what he took not away—magnified and honoured all his perfections! This Jesus is the very flower of Paradise! the object of his Father's complacency!—*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*; he was so from eternity—in him he beheld the express image of his person: In him, as Mediator, he beholds the doer of his will—the dispenser of his grace—*I have glorified thee on earth, and finished the work thou gavest me to do*, John xvii. Even in his human nature he is super-eminentely excellent, not only in its union with the Divine, but in

its perfect righteousness. A fulness of grace and truth is manifested in the very human nature of Christ. Now, consider what regard must be had to his intercessions in the Court of Heaven—how great his interest there! Can a request miscarry in such hands? Can he pray in vain! Wouldst thou wish, O Christian, thy help laid any where else? trust that he will perfect what concerns thee—See him able to save to the uttermost, &c.

SECONDLY, Consider that this Intercession, carried on by our exalted High Priest, is always conformable to the Divine will, and is made for these who are the special objects of the Father's love. The Intercession of Christ in heaven, and of the Spirit in the heart, agree together, and are carried on for the same ends and respect—the same objects and blessings. Now, the intercession of the Spirit in the saints is according to the will of God; he enables to pray, and prepares the heart to ask what he sees meet to grant: So it is in some respect with the intercession of Christ in heaven; every thing he asks God is willing to grant, therefore his praying must be effectual; the persons prayed for are dear to God. Christ accordingly commands his disciples to rejoice in this, John xvi. 25. 26. 27. He does not there suppose his intercession was needful because the Father was unwilling to grant; but to implement his part of the covenant, that the blessings of it might come through him, as the channel, to them. An unbelieving heart looks on God as an irreconcilable enemy—not viewing him in Christ. It is otherwise with Christians; they see him in Jesus, not only smiling on their nature, but on themselves—He loves them as his jewels—cares for them as his children—is himself the spring of that eternal love that flows forth

towards them; and therefore is well pleased with Christ's intercession for them.

THIRDLY, The prevalence of Christ's Intercession, and the certainty of its success, appears, if we consider that it proceeds upon the satisfaction and the sacrifice which he offered up of himself to God; in virtue of this he intercedes, as we shewed above. His blood is, as it were, presented in one hand, and the Christian's case in the other; hence the Father hears him always. The plea is used by saints on earth, and found effectual by them. God places it on this bottom—*Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors,* Isa. liii. 12.: God smells a sweet savour in it, and is pleased—justice, mercy, and truth, all conspire to render such petitions acceptable. (Not to repeat what is said above), It will appear more clearly in this respect, if we notice,

1st, The infinite worth and value of the sacrifice—the blood of him that was God; it was offered up through the Eternal Spirit—it was a Lamb without spot. Christ the righteous was the offerer. Victims (if such had been possible) of millions of angels had been of no avail—not the first-born could have atoned for the transgression; but these heavenly petitions are recommended by better things. We disparage the value of Christ's blood, when we give way to doubting; we trample on it: But God, who is ever the same, smells as sweet a savour from it as when first offered up,

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2dly, The efficacy of Christ's Intercession appears, if we consider, That by his death a legal purchase was made of all the blessings prayed for. Christ's blood was not shed in vain; he laid it down as a price and ransom: Hence he received the promise of the Father, and gives it to us in the way of free grace; so that all he asks for us, and bestows on us, is a purchased possession. Canst thou then fail? Can thy cause, thus secured, O Christian, miscarry?—*As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever, Isa. lix. 21.*—“This (with reverence) is the blood of the “Covenant; this, O Father, is the price paid—the “blessing is great, but the ransom is equivalent; let “such an one, then, be remembered with the promised mercy.” But,

3dly, The satisfaction given by him illustrates the efficacy of his Intercession, in regard of its relation to the persons prayed for, it was offered for them expressly—“*For their sakes I sanctify myself, &c.* what “this contains, my people have a right to and shall “enjoy.” Christ knew for whom he died—had them all on his heart; so grace is not only purchased, but for them; the blood of sprinkling speaks for them: Therefore the High Priest's Intercession for them must be effectual.—Let this be improved through Divine assistance.

S E R M O N XXVII.

LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THERE are few Divine truths that have their proper efficacy on us; most satisfy themselves with general notion of them, and view them not in God's light: Hence our hearts remain cold, even when the Sun of righteousness shines around us; the most blessed privileges are viewed in an unconcerned way. The natural blindness of our hearts is, no doubt, the great cause of this; but one thing that helps it forward is, that we do not view the blessings, privileges, &c. of a Christian in their proper connection, and do not dig deep to come at the living water: For this reason, it is necessary to illustrate such truths as these last insisted on, by going, if possible, to the foundation of them. The Spirit of God often teaches this way.—I was illustrating the efficacy of Christ's Intercession by some considerations, to which add,

FOURTHLY, The prevalent efficacy of the Intercession of Christ will appear, if we consider that the great Intercessor is, in the œconomy and dispensation of grace, himself appointed the heir of all things; that from him, as its immediate fountain, might flow all the fulness of Divine grace. Whatever was necessary for bringing his seed to glory was promised him:

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Our interests are all put in his hands—pardon of sin, and the seal of it—grace, and the growth of it; even temporal blessings in a covenant way, and life eternal, &c. Now all is put in his hand, under seal of a promise for its efficacy and application—*He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand*, Isa. liii. 10.; here is a twofold cord! Christ has the blessing in his hand—is the great Steward of it, and has the Father's promise concerning its application. View his Intercession as connected with these. Here the faithfulness of God, and the plan of the Covenant concur to make it effectual; his design cannot be disappointed: Our security is laid on God's nature—his declared will—inwrought with the original and eternal plan of grace, concerted by infinite wisdom. O Christian! consider the ever-blessed Trinity as laying a plan to be executed for the glory of Divine wisdom, &c. in and towards *thee*! nothing forgot in it; no back-door left in it, that the promise might be sure to all the seed; therefore thou mayest defy all thy enemies—*Cast thy burden on the Lord*. Oh! that others would take encouragement to come here also!

FIFTHLY, The value and efficacy of this Intercession appears in the blessed consequences of it in the saints—they are the glory of Christ, the witnesses of his grace; they answer to it as the wax to the seal: All this work, in and on them, bears some reference to Christ as their living head, their pattern and archetype. Now, look what was the consequence of Christ's praying in Peter's case; he was humbled, was kept from despair, and was gloriously brought back. O! my Brethren, can none of you bear a testimony of a like kind to Christ? Have you been encouraged
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when clouds and darkness seemed gathering around you? Have your very backslidings, that seemed fraught with destruction, ever been turned to your enemy's confusion? Have you after many days been visited? Have you been surprised with preventing grace? &c. —Think what thou art and wert! thou wilt see the finger of God has been here—the smell of Christ's garments of salvation; the mercy to which it thus leads thee to the view of a Redeemer interceding for thee, will have double sweetness, and will fill thy heart with hope and gladness.—So be it to thy servant.

THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THIS SUBJECT.

I HAVE now, through Divine assistance, discussed the Doctrinal part of the subject—having pointed out some of the trying and difficult circumstances of Christians, chiefly of an inward kind, wherein Satan endeavours to sift them, and, if possible, extinguish, or cloud their graces; the means whereby they fall into these circumstances, and how Satan gets advantage over them therein; the ends wherefore God, though he loves them, permits this. This may be looked on as the Christian's danger and distress.—The second part of the text lays before us his cure; wherein I have further shewn you, how Christ's Intercession is applied at all times for God's people, and chiefly in their trials, as above; its nature, properties, and the methods whereby it is carried on; its design, and effects; its particular application, or the interest every Christian has in it; and, *lastly*, the prevalent efficacy of it, and certainty of its success. These I think it necessary to put you in mind of, that you may have a guide to that *improvement* that remains to be made, chiefly
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on the last part of the subject, the former being in some measure already applied. The *improvement* is designed to be practical; and I shall begin with these Inferences:

FIRST, From what has been said, We may infer the compleat fulness and suitableness of that saving power wherewith the Lord Christ is invested. This inference the Apostle Paul makes—*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. Does Jesus live for ever?—Then they now have as good ground of hope, who come to God through him, as before: Does he live for ever? Then no distance of time, no delay, can throw a bar in the way: But, alas! how shall we come to God, and be sure not to miss him!—Jesus lives making intercession: But how appear in these garments stained with guilt!—We have an Interceding Advocate with the Father!—His retaining his office in his present state of glory is, then, a manifestation of his power to save; and an encouragement to put thy soul in his hand. Now, his saving power, for the encouragement of sinners, is thus displayed, in regard that,

FIRST, It appears herein there is a virtue and efficacy in his mediation applicable to every believing soul—the incense of the blessed Sacrifice is still going up: The High Priest is even now before the mercy-seat, with the blood of the Covenant in his hand: Just now, sinner, he presents it before the Father, and thou, being of the congregation of Israel, to whom the word of salvation is sent, hast just now a blessed opportunity put in thy hand! Christ has the merit of a

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sacrifice to offer for thy guilty soul; and whosoever refuses his part in it, *Thus saith the Lord, He shall be Anathema, and accursed from God's presence for ever.* But,

SECONDLY, The Intercession of Christ demonstrates the fulness and all-sufficiency of his saving power, in regard it appears that he will leave nothing undone that is necessary for effectuating their compleat deliverance—There is a fulness of merit in his blood, but it may be said, who shall apply it?—the well is deep, and I have nothing to draw with: Here is the balm, but where is the physician? Why, sinner, here!—He is able to save thee, and is actually applying the sacrifice. But he may leave me afterwards: No; for he carries on the design in heaven as on earth, and will never lose sight of thee. But I am overwhelmed with sin and temptation, and weighed down with a wicked heart that will provoke God more and more: Then place thy dealing with Heaven in his hands, and thou shalt succeed.

THIRDLY, Christ's Intercession represents him as able to save at all times, and in the greatest depths. We are daily marring our work; here is one who daily sets it right again—an ever-flowing fountain; a friend in time of need—a friend whose love many waters cannot quench; through whom unlooked for help shall meet us when the devil leads us away captive. Nothing can save us in any circumstance, but to get the strong man within engaged with one stronger; the stream is too violent for us; hence we are heartless: But an interceding High Priest rebukes him. The view of his character enables the Christian to do it in his strength; hence he must be victorious. Now, thus Christ appears able to save to the uttermost; then, sinner,

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put thy soul in his hand! Thou who hast been seeking rest and finding none—here fix! Why does Christ display his excellency, but to engage your hearts to him? Jesus brings near the pearl of great price, and calls us to buy. To glorify him is to give him work, to shew we believe him—Oh! think of it *, to say we do not need Christ, is to throw dust and contempt on the whole of his undertaking; to say he will not help us, is to give him the lie; to stand at a distance for fear of presumption, is like the man who got the talent, and hid it in the earth, fearing his master, Mat. xxv. 24. Every unbeliever is guilty here, either of one or all of these—Oh apply this, Christian, put your work in Christ's hand; he complains for want of it—*hitherto ye have asked nothing*. Fear not to weary him with your applications; for he is willing—fear not the effect; for he is able to save to the uttermost.

SECONDLY, From what has been said you may see, That if you have any cause depending before the court of heaven, then here is the great Intercessor, to manage your plea successfully. Wouldst thou desire to deal with God? Is it heart-work, and not yea and nay with thee? then rejoice, here is one, whose interest thou mayst employ, exalted to be both Lord and Christ—such an High Priest as becomes thee; one not ignorant of thy infirmities. Art thou a guilty sinner, and therefore often racked with the thoughts of it? he is Jesus Christ the righteous. Art thou afraid thy vain wandering heart marr the work? that thou and thy petitions be both loathsome in God's sight? then keep thine eye on him—commit thy cause to him;

* Three forms of unbelief shewn and condemned.

him; tell him you leave it in his hands, and that thou wilt wait a gracious answer. Art thou waiting for a sentence of acquittal from the great Judge, desiring it from himself in the word? and canst not be satisfied with a dead letter, or a dead faith? Oh! if thou canst but get thy cause rolled over on this Advocate it will ease thee of thy load—it will give thee rest; then thou wilt come from thy knees rejoicing. Is it a plea for the increase of grace?—a complaint concerning the deceit or violence of thine enemies? wouldst thou be sure not to miss the blessing? then give thy heart and thy request to Jesus; commit thy way to him, and he will bring it to pass, Psal. xxxvii. 5. But will he undertake it? This is a question concerning which some cannot be easily satisfied; but if we were willing to take God's testimony of it, it is plain;—God has called him to the office, and invites us to him under that character; Christ offers himself also; and it is the will of all the persons of the blessed Trinity, that we thus honour God's Anointed. Ye have asked nothing in my name, says Christ; ask and ye shall receive. *

THIRDLY, Are closed lips, or close hearts our burden in prayer? Then, from what has been said we may have comfort in these circumstances. A heart and mouth shut up is a great burden, when one is not able to make language of his case to God, and only the outside of prayer is left; a Christian will then be sensible that his burdens are many, and yet cannot get them disburdened. Well, there is an High Priest that knows your case—can understand your weak mints; and nothing remains but to cast the whole burden on him, according to his knowledge of the case, and trusting to his bowels of compassion—Thus shalt thou find rest.

SERMON

S E R M O N XXVIII.

LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

WE entered, last Lord's day, on the application of this subject; and now propose to proceed in it, laying down such inferences as may be of the greatest use, either for our comfort or direction in the Christian life. All our springs are in Jesus—If our comfort is not derived from him, it is false and will be short-lived; if our holiness is not derived from him, it will be like the four grapes God speaks of. The great art of our life is to live upon Jesus; for if a man abide not in him he is cast out as a branch. Infer, in the

FOURTH Place, From what has been said, we may see a suitable antidote against the fear of apostasy; and direction as to the manner of laying hold of God's covenant. Fears of apostasy sometimes mix bitterness in the cup of God's people, even when otherwise it overflows—One day I shall dishonour God, and fall by the hand of my bosom enemy. Experience of the deceitfulness of the heart; feeling the root of bitterness, even when allowed to come near God's seat, and the inward working of corruption following him thither; long coldness and withdrawing of the heart from God, &c. all these stir up fears of being finally

finally left. An unbelieving heart will, of itself, suggest such difficulties to marr a Christian's peace; hence hands hang down—he can hope but feebly, not with that boldness and confidence which the scripture recommends. Here then is thy security, O Christian! Christ shall hold thee by thy right hand; when Satan and an evil heart draw thee away, he shall draw thee to himself by these intercessions; when the things that remain are ready to die, he shall say, *destroy it not, for there is a blessing in it.* If enemies, then, beset thee round, and thou fearest to be led captive, thou mayst see the mountain full of fiery chariots and horses—A view of Jesus standing at the altar may dispel thy fears all at once: “O Sin, “where is thy power?”—it shall not have dominion over thee, “O Satan, where is thy victory?”—Our rejoicing is in Christ, and God forbid we should boast in any thing else; but sure here we may boast if set on the right foundation, and do it safely in spite of all opposition: The foundation laid in our souls of a spiritual Temple shall be finished, with shoutings of grace ~~grace~~ to its great Author—“Thine, O Jesus, is “the honour, and thine let it be to all eternity.”—But, further, as there is security here against the fears of apostasy, so there may arise direction also in the matter of laying hold of God's covenant. Few have an extensive enough view of this matter; they do not see God, as in Christ, giving security for the steadfastness of the poor soul; some look for every thing else from God, but this from themselves—hence they enter just into a covenant of works. I speak not of what men say to God, but of the real inward thought of the heart in dealing with him. Now, this is robbing God of his due; it is establishing a strength of
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our own, in opposition to the grace that is in Jesus. Others again, either at first conversion, or at any subsequent dealing of the soul with God, are afraid to venture forward, because they do not know how they shall be kept stedfast, and tremble to set their hand to God's covenant—their hearts misgive them, they fear much that all shall go back again. Now herein we err, not knowing God's grace and the power of it; the preserving grace and interceding mercy of the Lord Christ, are as much the object of faith and matter of the promise as the pardon of sin is: *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people,* Heb. viii. 10. Therefore be not faithless, but believing. Let every sinner lay hold on God's strength, and thus make peace with him; lay hold on the sacrifice—on the intercession flowing from the sacrifice, this cannot be presumption; for it is giving God the glory—it is following his call; it is the only manner wherein we can be saved, or enter into God's covenant at all.

FIFTHLY, From what has been said we may see the true ground of a Christian's acceptance with God in every duty—it even arises from the mediation and intercession of the Lord Christ. He presents not only our persons—not only our prayers; but every service truly acceptable, as it is derived from his grace, so it is perfumed with his intercession. Vain men, ignorant of the holiness of God, think to deal with him in their own name—Like proud Pharisees, they boast, *God I thank thee, &c.* They think not of the vileness that flows from the corrupt heart, and makes
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the whole a smoke in his nostrils. It is otherwise with Christians—They cannot venture into God's fight but under the covert of blood; and this, as presented by their divine intercessor, makes their weak mints accepted—*well done good and faithful servant*; God looks on the man as in Christ, and says so. When they abstract from this, and look only on themselves, what view have they of the matter?—Enter not into judgment, O Lord, with thy servant. Alas! all my prayers, and every other spiritual sacrifice are defiled; but they are *accepted in the beloved*, Eph. i. 6. Their prayers, like those of Cornelius, come in remembrance—their *labour of love* is not forgotten, Heb. vi. 10.; their *faith, charity and patience* are mentioned with honour, Rev. ii. 19. What encouragement is this to serve God, to spend and be spent in his work; nothing that is done for him, or the least of his servants, is forgotten—the widow's mite shall be accepted in the beloved; the cup of cold water given to a disciple; an appearance for the name and honour of Christ, when boldly attacked by impious men; the secret worship and devotion of the heart, seen to none but God—all shall be accepted, if done in the name of Christ. Let us remember, then, to offer up all our services in his name. In the

SIXTH place, What has been said may afford us very suitable direction in our Christian warfare, even to engage all our spiritual adversaries in the strength of the promised intercession of the Lord Christ. How weak are our resolutions!—how insufficient any supplies we have hitherto received! Satan may come in an hour we look not for, and attack in a manner we know not how to resist; temptations that seemed vanquished will rise again, as from their ashes; corrup-
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tion break in like a flood over every fence: Hence we will be forced to cry out, *O wretched that we are!* &c. What wilt thou do then, Christian! thy strength is small—Even match thine enemies with one stronger. They have stood out, thou thinkest, many a prayer of thine; but shall they prevail against those of the Lord Christ?—Thou fightest with the Amalekites in the valley; but if the High Priest hold up his hands for thee, they will be worsted. It is the art of Satan to draw us away, if possible, from acting faith on Christ—then we are an easy prey; but adhere to thy Lord, claim an interest in his prayers, complain of thine enemies as his—complain that thou art led captive; and he will bring thee back. How many have found deliverance here, who have in vain sought it elsewhere!—The earth said, *It is not in me*; vows and resolutions have all proved broken reeds—Wilt thou not, then, come hither and take up thy rest? If we could be more steady in our adherence to Christ, our enemies would be soon subdued; but we have not patience—we say, Why should we wait any longer? we forget the danger; the enemy comes, and finds us asleep; we are dreaming, like Samson, and go out thinking it is with us as before; but sad experience convinces of the contrary.

SEVENTHLY, From what has been said, We may see ground to magnify and extol the love of Christ to his people. All that ever he did and suffered, shews it as in a glass; it is written, as with a sun-beam, in his life and death; and many waters do not quench it. He loves to the end—he died with them on his heart; still his love flows down upon them in streams of blessings. His exalted state does not make them forgotten; amidst the hallelujahs of his angels they are

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remembered. Their own provocations do not make them forgotten; he returns them good for evil, prayers and blessings for much wretched ingratitude and folly—he is all along like himself. He loved them when they were lying in their blood; he loves them still, in spite of much to provoke his hatred. When the Jews saw Christ weep at Lazarus' grave, they could not but say, *Behold how he loved him!*—*What manner of love is this!* Christ praying for one he saw going to deny him—casting an eye of pity after the vile worm, whom he might, in a moment, crush to nothing?—What art thou! think on thyself—Where hadst thou been at this hour if he had not cared for thee when thou didst not care for thyself? How often has he, by his intercession, plucked thee as a brand from the burning? Never did Moses plead for the children of Israel as he hath done for thee when thou knewest not. O the love of Christ! it passeth knowledge! If we hold our peace, the stones will cry out: His love is the wonder of all but sinners and devils—the angels of God adore it; the saints lift up their voices and fill heaven with the melody: All but stupid wretched creatures, who know not the Gift of God, will: You will not, but others will—Christ shall not want a seed to serve him. You who will not lift up your hearts to praise and adore this wonder of heaven, shall howl with devils for ever. His servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; THEY shall come and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but ye shall be cast out. O! let heaven and earth, and all their hosts, and our souls, lift up an united hallelujah to him who loved us from eternity—loved us living and dying; and still expresses his love for us in unceasing prayers!

Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N XXIX.

LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

THE exercise of looking to Jesus, is one of the great means of encouragement and direction in a Christian life; from him is our supply derived, in him is our life hid. Faith, beholding him, surmounts the highest obstacles, and overleaps walls: Hence it is the great end, in preaching the gospel, to set him before you. For this reason, I have insisted so long on this subject—leading your views to the glorious part he acts within the veil—the blessed effects thereof in the saints; and how streams of love and grace flow from above, where Christ sits at the right-hand of God. I now extend the *application* of the subject. One important question will arise from what has been said—Who is the man that may lay claim to the privilege of Christ's Intercession? With this view, I propose,

SECONDLY, An use of trial from what has been said. All Christians have it; even the babe in grace; even the tempted sifted soul; even he, sometimes, who dares not think or expect that he is so noticed. The marks proposed shall be such as evidence a state

of grace in general, and have a relation to this privilege in particular.

FIRST, then, Ask yourselves, Has a spirit of prayer and supplication been poured down on you? This is an evidence of Christ's intercession for you. Where the Spirit dictates a prayer in the heart, (Rom. viii. 26.) Christ certainly prays for the blessing in heaven. All the persons of the blessed Trinity concur in carrying on the work of redemption; all do it consistently with one another: Hence the working of the Holy Ghost in the soul, is analogous to the workings of Divine love in Christ—they flow, as it were, from this sacred fountain. If a man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Know you, then, what it is to have the Spirit helping your infirmities—dictating your prayers—leading you to the mercy-seat—filling your mouth with arguments; not merely by stirring up your affections. Many mistake a fluency of speech for the Spirit of prayer. Let me tell you, God's people know what it is to have the one, while they want the other: But the Spirit not only enlarges the desires, but draws the very heart to God—puts an argument in the mouth, and brings the soul, as it were, in speaking terms with him—adapts, enlightens, and applies the promise—shews its suitableness—testifies to it as God's word, and enables to insist, like Jacob, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*, Gen. xxxii. 26. *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. Finally, There are here many things hardly to be expressed but to God himself. Now, knowest thou any thing of this dealing with God?—that work which is not yea and nay? Hast thou had such encouragement in wrestling for thy poor soul—for pardon,

don, for strengthening grace? Then, assuredly, Christ has been praying for thee; for the Spirit only makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God, Rom. viii. 27. But,

SECONDLY, Ask your hearts, Do I rest all my hopes upon the blood of atonement? and can I never be satisfied without winning to distinct acts of faith thereupon? To many, dealing with God is an easy matter; they think him such an one as themselves: If they name the name of Christ they think it sufficient. Not so a Christian—prayer is wrestling indeed with him: Words will not do—To say, merely, Save me for Christ's sake, will not do: He has all his hopes bottomed on Christ's atonement—But, then, he cannot be pleased till his soul be brought unto the very cross—till he sit down under its shadow—getting the near stedfast view of Christ; this lightens him, and nothing else will. Knowest thou this? If not, thou art without Christ; if thou doest indeed, Jesus has presented thy prayers—he has presented his own for thee; and after many days thou shalt be visited.

THIRDLY, If you are at any time led captive by Satan, does godly sorrow fill your hearts, as in Peter's case? This was the first-fruits of Christ's prayer for him; here his grace began to triumph. There is a sorrow arising from fear, shame, or some carnal selfish motive; this I do not speak of; but of sorrow, influenced by faith's views of a crucified Jesus. Is thine of this sort? Is thy heart abased? Art thou filled with holy indignation against thyself? Does the thought of having dishonoured God wound thy soul? Does all this lead thee to mourn over, and confess thy guilt? (This last article chiefly to be noticed.) Then the promise has been accomplished—*And I will pour up-*
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on the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born, Zech. xii. 10. Christ has been praying for thee; nature neither softens the heart nor leads to God, but grace does both.

FOURTHLY, Can you never be satisfied to live at a distance from God? And when sin causes him to hide his face, Are you absolutely restless in that condition? Then Christ prays for thee.—What remains now is, to conclude our meditations on this subject, by an use of *Exhortation*. The Doctrine presents an ample field for this purpose; and I beg your serious attention to it. In order to make it the more useful, I shall direct it to different classes of persons, begging each to suppose me, or rather the great God, speaking to himself, according to his character. And,

FIRST, Let me address myself to those who have reason to think they have a title to the blessed privilege mentioned in the text; that is, True Christians.

FIRST, My Dear Brethren, Improve the interest you have in the Lord Christ and his prayers. You are blessed with a privilege that strangers intermeddle not with; for you Christ prays, not for the world. You have interest in heaven, and a treasure there—live upon it; ye are heirs of all things—all that Christ has purchased, and God has promised: Ask therefore, and receive; open wide your mouths; enlarge your hearts—your prayers can never come unseasonably. Fear not to approach the mercy-seat, it is sprinkled with

with blood. Fear not, justice itself shall speak for you. Fear not that your importunity be in vain—though the answer tarry long, wait for it; it shall certainly come. The Intercessor seeks employment from you—says, What is thy request, and it shall be granted! Come, then, boldly to the throne of grace.

SECONDLY, Let me exhort you to read the distinguishing love of Christ in every mercy, especially in spiritual mercies. Every visit you have from God, every return of prayer, every victory over temptation; all these flow from Christ's intercession for you—he has prayed, and therefore faith has not failed. Methinks a blessing is doubly sweet, when it is a glass wherein to behold Christ, not only in himself, but acting for us. Answers to our own prayers are sweet—Answers to his are more so; for his gifts are without repentance. Every blessing, every visit from Heaven, in this view, is a charter, as it were; a bundle of Eshcol grapes—first-fruits of the promised land—tokens of remembrance from your Friend in the far country. Do they not delight your souls? Do they not speak a language like Heaven?—Even the small reviving, the smoking of the flax; these flow from this Fountain.

THIRDLY, Think on his tender love and compassion to you, till the fire kindle in your hearts, and rise to a holy flame. We love him; for he first loved us. Set yourselves down to contemplate it; turn it on every side—say, Thus he loved me. Come always thither to add fresh fuel to the flame—" Arise, my cold heart; look within the vail; see the High Priest ministering there, and presenting his sacred blood; " see all the names of his elect engraven on his heart; " see

“ see thy own name there ; mark how he remembers
 “ thee, worthless creature ! see his hands lifted up to
 “ bless thee, even when thou art lifting up the heel
 “ against him ! see how balm flows from him to heal
 “ thy wounds !—grace to enliven thee ; see how he
 “ pities thy weakness, and will not suffer thee to de-
 “ stroy thyself !” While thou thus musest let the fire
 burn.—“ Lord, I have nothing to give worth thy ta-
 king : But oh ! if I had the tongue of a seraph to
 “ praise thee ! Oh, if I could enlarge this heart, and
 “ set thy throne in it on high ! Oh, if I could bid a-
 “ dieu to every thought but thoughts of thee ! Woes
 “ me that I cannot serve thee better,” &c. Thus let
 faith work, and exert itself by love.

FOURTHLY, Rejoice in the belief of it, that as he
 carries on, so he will finish thy work and warfare, and
 bruise Satan under thy feet for ever—A few more
 steps to take, and thou shalt be at rest. Christ shall
 pronounce thy discharge from thy warfare, saying,
 Father, I will that such an one be with me.—*Amen*,
 O Lord.

SECONDLY, Let me direct the *exhortation* to
 those who may be minding, or essaying to close with
 Christ ; and though they cannot positively lay claim
 to his Intercession, yet have their hearts breathing af-
 ter God, the living God. Your condition is safe and
 blessed, my Brethren. God will perfect what con-
 cerns you, to you he speaks in the following man-
 ner :

FIRST, Look to Jesus as the spring of grace and
 its exercise. Perhaps thou canst find little in thyself
 —knowest not how to converse with him—hast learn-
 ed little of Heaven’s language ; and knows not how
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to say, *My Lord, and my God*—Learn of him; commit thyself to him. Let thy need embolden thee to ask grace: Thou seest how he strengthens the weak—how his intercession brings out the hidden spark into a flame. Venture nothing in thine own strength, but all in his. If thou gettest the Divine art of employing his power, then thou shalt do valiantly. *It is not I*, says the Apostle, *that live, but Christ that liveth in me*. Weak as thou art, it is not impossible for an omnipotent arm to carry thee on through all the legions of thine enemies. Christ living in me answers all; though I am nothing, yet here I am rich!—Make use of this treasure.

SECONDLY, If Satan follows thee hard, take immediate sanctuary under Christ's wings. May-be he meets thee in the way—legions beset thee; thou knowest not how to extricate thyself. Though all the powers of hell, and all the legions that have possessed thy own soul, should follow thee, and endeavour to stop thy mouth, fear not—*I will in no wise cast out!* Come in thy rags—fly for thy life, though it were dragging thy chain with thee! You see Christ is able to make you free, and be assured he will do so.

THIRDLY, Take encouragement; for you see the day of small things will not be despised. If the things that remain are weak, Christ will strengthen them; if there is but some good thing found, though almost imperceptible, he will cherish it; though surrounded by enemies endeavouring to blow it out, he will hold his hand about it; it is his—it is heaven-born, even the weakest degree of faith is so, the very first breathing of desire. Comfort you, then, weak Christians; thus saith Christ, *I will pray for thee*. I come now, in the

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THIRD and *last* place, To direct the *exhortation* to those that are Satan's willing subjects—who have never had the chain broken. To you who live without Christ—who are content to let others go to heaven, while you sink in perdition. To you who are strangers to the new birth, whatever else you may have attained. Oh! that I had a tongue to speak to you, poor captives! you are in a sad state; without God—under Heaven's curse; and your souls sinking to the bottomless pit. Oh! be exhorted,

FIRST, To consider your wretched case! You have no share in Christ's prayers. Satan is leading you hood-winked to hell—Yet a little while and the clouds open—the Judge appears—flaming fire surrounds him—the guilty soul is called for!—"Thou art the man who said to the gold, Thou art my rock—Thou art the man who trampled on my blood! Thou art the man who lived and died in open rebellion against me!—you slighted my message, and abused my Messenger! Thou art he who laughed at me to my Face—who said, Depart from me; for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways: Therefore, *Depart from me, ye cursed,*" &c. Sinner, I come to give you warning—Hell from beneath is opening to swallow thee up; the devil is triumphing over thee—perhaps triumphing in having taken thee out of the net which I have spread for thee many a time.—Wilt thou? Darest thou say, Depart from me! &c. Oh! rather let me, in the

SECOND place, Invite and call you to the fellowship of the saints, and to cast in your lot among his people. Oh, come to Christ for a whole salvation! Oh, let me beseech you in his stead! Nay, I will pray you—Fain would I have you, my Dear Brethren, come to Christ. If
you

you knew the Gift of God?—if you knew how excellent and lovely the Redeemer is! Oh! what shall I say to dead souls? I am discouraged that you will not hear. I am grieved that Christ should be slighted, and souls lost. Oh, speak thou Almighty Spirit! O Jesus, cry—Lazarus come forth! Will you lift up your eyes to him, as lifted up to draw men to him? Christ will not cast you out. Oh! let there be a stretching forth of souls to Jesus this day; he is asking you if you will be healed! Cry—Yes, Lord, heal me; Lord, save me—I am thine; I am willing that thy whole work be performed in and on me. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XXX.

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

THE great design of the Gospel Ministry is, to bring souls from darkness to light—to be the instrument of divorcing them from self, and the law as a covenant of works; that they may be married to Christ. This was the scope of the Apostle's labours, 2 Cor. xi. 2. The Spirit of God brings about this blessed relation by opening to the heart the promises relative to it, and opening the heart to receive them in faith. The Son of God comes in a gospel-dispensation—long he follows us—much he solicits us; having sent his messenger before his face, to chase us from the refuge of lies, he comes at last himself; and, in the still small voice of the gospel, says, *Soul, I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.* Then the heart yields—the contract is made; there is joy in heaven concerning it. The words of the text are a promise relative to this, made with an immediate view to the Old Testament Church; but bearing a respect to God's people in all ages, as the word of him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Verse 1, &c. are

&c. are spoken concerning backsliding people; but blessed be God, the backslidings of his people do not make him irreconcilable. He threatens, verse 5, and downwards, but (as expressed below) gives a door of hope; nevertheless, he threatens and chastises that he may reclaim them: Accordingly, he subjoins many gracious promises from verse 14, and downwards. I take up the words, therefore, as a promise of the spiritual espousals between Christ and believers; for as Christ is the Mediator of the Covenant, it is with respect to him, primarily, they must be meant. There is in the words, —1st, God condescending to promise a great privilege—*Betrothing to himself*.—2^{dly}, The solemnities attending it, and the blessed outgoings of grace in it—*in righteousness, in judgment, &c.*—3^{dly}, The parties, God and elect-sinners.—4^{thly}, The term of the contract, Eternity. Oh! my Brethren, give ear to such a proposal, that your souls may live. Let sinners hear, and saints say, I will go and return to my first husband; for it was better with me formerly than now. Let it be remembered here, that I am to address myself, with this offer in my mouth, to all sorts of persons: And what I propose, in this view, (with Divine assistance) is,

I. To shew the nature and blessedness of the privilege here mentioned, *Espousals, or betrothing to Christ for ever*.

II. To shew how these Espousals are brought about and accomplished, both in general and with respect to particular persons.

III. Shortly to explain the circumstances and tenor of this marriage-contract, as made in *righteousness, judgment, loving-kindness, mercies, and faithfulness*,

IV. To

IV. To make a general application of the whole matter.

FIRST, *I am to shew the nature and blessedness of the blessing here promised.* The promise of this blessing is a matter of the highest condescension on God's part—of the greatest honour to fallen man. We are sunk to hell—God promises to raise us from thence, higher than before! The Son of God, by the Father's will, marries himself to our nature! the highest honour that could be put on it—an honour not done to the nature of angels. He proposes next to be married to elect sinners—to bring us into an union with, and relation to himself. This union is spoke of in the scriptures under various figures; it is represented by that betwixt the root and the branches—*I am the vine, ye are the branches*, John xv. 5.; the head and members—*Know ye not, that your bodies are the members of Christ?* 1 Cor. vi. 15.; husband and wife—*Thy Maker is thine husband*, Isa. liv. 5.: Yea, we are said to be one spirit with him. From these learn,

FIRST, That the union between believers and Christ is a blessed reality. We speak not of cunningly devised fables, when we declare this mystery. 'Nature says, indeed, How can it be? But God is not ashamed to own it, and call himself our husband! Christ delights to give his Spouse this name; and maintains communion with her as such*! It seems he delights that we should take him up under this name from the promises, verse 16. of this chapter—*Thou shalt call me Isbi, my husband*; and if God says so, shall we refuse it? Dare we deny it? If the unbelieving lord (2 Kin. vii. 2.)

* See book of Canticles throughout.

vii. 2.) met with such punishment for his unbelief, what may we expect, if, in a higher matter, we dare misbelieve the blessing of Heaven? These lips shall perish—that soul shall be blotted out of the book of life, who is ashamed of what God owns; and, either in words or practically, disclaims the relation. But,

SECONDLY, As it is a blessed reality, so there is nothing on earth fully like it. Husband and wife are one flesh; but he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit!—it is a matter of faith; but, though it is a mystery, the blessed effects of it are felt—the Spirit of Jesus dwelling in the soul, and life coming seasonably from the Head Christ.

THIRDLY, It is a miracle of Divine power and grace; it is God himself that is the author of this sacred relation! He has made this as the wonder among wonders! It is the King of heaven that makes the marriage for his Son! It is God himself that ties the knot!—the same God, who, by invisible bands, hath joined soul and body together. Oh, how wonderful is this love! it hath, indeed, a height and depth surpassing the knowledge of men or angels! By the mouth of the Eternal Jehovah, the new name is named on us sinners, and such as we are!

FOURTHLY, It is called here a BETROTHING, as elsewhere in scripture a *marriage*; because, though the union is made up here, yet the perfection of its blessedness is reserved for heaven. Hence Christ is represented as coming from thence as a Bridegroom, Mat. xxv.: It is then the marriage of the Lamb comes with splendor—*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*, Rev. xix. 7.; because there the Bride is brought with gladness to
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the King's palace, Psal. xlv. 15.: But we are not therefore to think the bargain is unsure. Nay, the relation is fixed; so that it never shall be dissolved, not even when heaven and earth shall pass away. Now, this general account of the matter leads us to view the privilege more nearly. When God says, *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*, &c.

1st, It implies that the relation has in it much nearness and intimacy. A man leaves father and mother; but his wife and he are called *one flesh*: Even so he that is joined to the Lord stands in so close a relation, that he is said to be *one spirit* with him: Hence there is such a likeness between Christ and his Spouse—hence the common feeling between them: His honour is their rejoicing—nor is he dishonoured, but they are grieved. He, on the other hand, rejoices with them in their conversion, in their victories, in their growth; what's done to them, he looks on as done to himself—he will not overlook the cup of cold water, nor suffer a wound given them to pass unnoticed. There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother—this is Christ. And as every relation on earth, parent, brother, and sister, have their peculiar endearments and ties; Christ takes all these to express the nearness of the union betwixt him and his people—*Behold my mother, and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother*, Mat. xii. 49, 50. O the height of this condescension! But,

2^{dly}, It is a dear and sweet relation—full of love. God's taking us so near, can be called like himself, and nothing else; for God is love—his love is beyond compare! A woman has, perhaps, forgot her sucking-child

child ; but thus saith the Lord, *I have engraven thee on the palms of my hands—as a seal on his heart.* Does a father pity his offspring? Does a husband cherish his wife as his own flesh? His thoughts are as far above these, as the heavens are above the earth! It is higher than heaven—what can we know? What can be expected from that LOVE that gave his Son for enemies! that LOVE that first made the Lord of glory stoop to the human nature, and then to the grave! These were the emanations of that same LOVE that embraces every, the meanest saint—such is the treasure to which Christ calls us. The love Christ bears his Spouse was from everlasting! The anguish of suffering the wrath of God falling on him—nay, our repeated provocations did not extinguish it! The flame of love in the heart of Christ's Spouse, is a live-coal taken from this altar—it ascends towards it; but, oh, how weak and dim! When it is raised above the waters of temptation, then it will be bright and unallayed; but still infinitely short of its original! Our hearts cannot hold it. The Spouse of Christ was sick of love, Song ii. 5. O for a feeling of the love of Christ! He is infinitely lovely, my Brethren—*Thou art fairer than the sons of men!*

THIRDLY, This relation between Christ and believers, implies a mutual propriety in one another. It may be expressed in the words of the Prophet—*Thou shalt not be for another man; so will I also be for thee*, Hof. iii. 3. There is a communion or common interest, in the faith of which the Spouse says, *I am my Beloved's, and he is mine.* God speaks the same language, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* Christ himself, under the relation of a husband, is indeed their utmost and highest desire; and he will

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have the heart, or he will have nothing. Believers can, in this relation, claim his Wisdom to lead them, to open their blind eyes; his Faithfulness to be their sure shield; his power to cover their head: As he is the heir of all things, they are heirs with him. *All is yours*, says the Apostle, *all, however poor in the world!* It is true, we have nothing to give the Bridegroom but our wretchedness and misery. As Mediator, he takes this on him; he at first took part with us of our nature! He took our sins on himself, and bare them, that he might purge them away; and as a husband becomes liable for the debts of his spouse, so he does for ours. On the other hand, they partake with him—have a fellowship in the treasure of his sufferings; their old man is crucified with him; they rise with him, and are partakers of the blessings of his resurrection; with him they partake of the Spirit; with him they are made kings and priests unto God; and with him they will be glorified!—Blessed communion, where our wants are amply made up! Our blessed Bridegroom wants no dowry with his Spouse—He cannot be enriched by us; he has provided all for us! But, in the

FOURTH place, This relation, like the marriage-tie, cannot be dissolved. Sin, or backsliding, does not dissolve it, though it hides the view of it: It shall be punished, indeed, with rods and stripes; but his loving-kindness shall not be taken away! When he sees his Spouse wandering on the mountains, does he say, Let her alone? When she goes on frowardly, after the way of her own heart, Does he leave her? Nay; he seeks her on the mountains, as one does a lost sheep! He sees her ways and heals—he puts a hedge in the way, and a wall that she may not find her paths.

Thanks

Thanks to his name, he does it whether we will or not. This is the reason why God's people are often more chastened than others. As to total apostasy, he will keep them from it. The power of God makes a fence that all the powers of hell cannot break through. I may add, that as he loved them in sovereignty, so it is impossible he can ever cease with loving-kindness to draw them.

FIFTHLY, This leads us to take notice that this relation excells all that we know on earth, in regard that it is Eternal. The marriage of a man and woman has this imbittering clause, *till death separate you*. The day of death treads fast after that of marriage; then the one party is loosed from the other; whatever joys lie before us in prospect, this sets bounds to them all: But it is otherwise here—*I will betroth thee unto me for ever*. When the body, which was a member of Christ, rots in the dust, he will own it in the midst of its ruins; while it says to corruption, *Thou art my brother*, the departed spirit shall sleep in Jesus! Just as a midnight sleep dissolves not a relation on earth; so shall not the sleep of death dissolve our relation to him with whom a thousand years are as a watch in the night. Yea, the day of a Christian's death hath sometimes, and justly, been called his consummation. Christ himself shall awake them in the morning: And as they are adorned with the wedding-garment of his righteousness, so he will deck them also with all outward splendor, that they may go in triumph to the palace of the great King! Their union with him shall be acknowledged; it shall be for ever their glory in heaven—the distinguishing glory of saints, while angels, though superior in nature and capacity, have it not; the Lamb in the midst of the

throne shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living water; and as Christ is the fountain, this shall be the channel of these living streams for ever.

AND now, methinks, I might have a particular advantage to lead you to a view of the blessedness of those who stand thus related to God: But, instead of this, let me at present call you to weigh God's proposal—to ask the way to Zion, setting your faces thitherward; the poorest and most unworthy among us is welcome. The design of what I have said, and may yet say, is, if the Lord will, to gain your consent to be the Lord's this way: Lift up your hands, therefore, to his testimony, and chuse it for your heritage for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XXXI.

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

PRACTICAL Christianity is indeed a great mystery; there are excellencies in it of which the world is wholly ignorant, and which Christians themselves know but in part. There is bread to eat the world knows nothing of. There is a hidden life with Christ in God. Union with Christ is the fountain of this life; or rather, Christ communicating himself to the soul is so. This privilege is declared in the text—declared as a promised blessing, which, in a due way, faith may lay hold on. I propose it to you, not as a matter of speculation. Christ comes near to gain your hearts!—May they be made to yield unto God. It was proposed, on the *First Head*, To shew the nature and blessedness of the privilege of being espoused to Christ: The former, namely, The nature and properties of this relation make way for the latter; namely, The blessedness thereof. For this purpose consider,

FIRST, That God here calls us to, and promises us an high and honourable alliance. David thought himself greatly honoured in being son-in-law to the king of Israel: But no diadem reflects so much honour on him that wears it, as this does on a believer; he that
betrothes

betrothes is the King of kings—he cutteth off the spirit of princes, &c. ; his kingdom is over all, and his throne for ever ; his glory fills heaven—that of the bright ministers of his throne is but a faint ray of it ! The glory spread over the creation, even in its original beauty, was but an obscure image of it. But what is the glory obvious to sense ? There are spiritual excellencies which the angels desire to look into, but see not the end of. This is the King of glory who condescends so low, that he may raise you high ! Consider Jesus, the beloved of the Father ! Glorious in his garments dyed with blood ! Glorious in his nature ! Glorious in his office of Peace-maker ! Glorious in his love and grace !—It is he that proposes an alliance with poor worms !—as if he delighted to raise us as high as the devil and sin had laid us low ! To be at all reconciled, had been much ; but that God should say, *Thy Maker is thy Husband*, is wonderful ! Shall God, in very deed, dwell with man on earth ? God himself looks on this as a great effect of his love, to enter into covenant with us, that we may become his. If an earthly prince made love to a beggar, it would appear incredible ; but the honour were not to be compared with this. But, in the

SECOND place, As this relation is high and honourable, so there are unsearchable riches for a soul in it. We are poor insolvent debtors—have nothing—are cast out, and lying in our blood ; our treasure is squandered away ; we have lost a covenant-right to temporal mercies, though God, in his goodness, still permits us to enjoy them. Christ finds us in this situation—the heir of all things takes us into fellowship with himself ! He has purchased a possession for us—a crown of glory—God to be our God ! Hence the Apostle says,

says, *All things are yours!*—present grace; direction; afflictions, as a blessing; fellowship with Christ Jesus; what temporal mercies are needful, and that in a covenant way, and with a special blessing. So that when God causes his sun to shine, and rain to fall on them and others equally, they have it in another way. Things to come are theirs also—Death, Christ has power over it; Glory, it is his purchase.—O Israel, a people blessed of the Lord! Let my part be with you: Let the lines fall on these pleasant places—the goodly heritage of the host of nations; and let every soul say *amen*.

THIRDLY, This relation entitles poor believers to their Husband's protection. They travel in a waste howling wilderness; Satan openly attacking, or secretly plotting against them—the world hating them; but in all places of the earth God is their sanctuary; they dwell in the munition of rocks—*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings*, Deut. xxxii. 11. He promiseth, that on all the glory of his people there shall be a defence, Isa. iv. 5.: His angels also have the charge of them—The mountain round the Prophet was full of horses and fiery chariots: These unseen ministers often do them good; and God often raises them friends where little expected, to be the instruments of good to them.

FOURTHLY, The blessedness of this relation to Christ appears, in that it infers the answering of all claims and demands against his Spouse. The law of God has a claim against her for satisfaction, &c. Christ answers it. Believers answer in faith, by an appeal to what Christ has done and suffered. Hence the
Apostle

Apostle—*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth*, Rom. viii. 32.: Many a challenge they will have; sin in duty—in neglect of duty—inward corruptions breaking out like a flood; hence they cry, *Enter not into judgment with us—Iniquities have compassed me about*. Where does a conscience find rest from this? Is it in neglecting it? No. Is it in an appeal—*I thank thee, I am not as other men?* No—Though thou purge thee with nitre, &c. iniquity will remain—the stain is too deep. How, then, is the demand answered? By Christ, by applying to his blood, which is the fountain opened for sin. When Satan, the accuser, stands up, this High Priest and husband opposes him effectually—nor does a conscience ever find right rest but here; all other methods are but nourishing a viper in the bosom, which at last will gnaw the bowels. Blessed are they who Christ answers for!

FIFTHLY, This is indeed a blessed relation, for it secures the believer's dwelling with his Husband for ever. We told you this relation is indissoluble, and eternal; from this flows much of the blessedness of it. He will come, as a Bridegroom, to bring home those that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice; he will not, he cannot (with reverence) want his Spouse; he has a mansion fitted up for her reception—*In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*, John xiv. 2, 3. When eternal ages have rolled on, their blessedness will still be a rest remaining, Heb. iv. 9. Sure your rock is not, O sinners! like that of believers. Now they

they are the sons of God; you are the sons of perdition! Heaven is theirs; hell yours!—Hardness of heart is the mark of hell on many of you. Oh! say, concerning the saints, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you; still there is room—the door is not shut. Oh! know the happy season of your peace. Who knows but God may mean good to you who have been long stout-hearted, and far from righteousness. Having shewed you the nature and blessedness of the privilege of being Espoused to Christ, I proceed, in the

SECOND Place, *To shew how these Espousals are brought about, concluded, and accomplished; both in general and with respect to particular persons.* This I do with a view to satisfy the enquiries of such as are really asking the way to Zion. Now, here two things are to be considered:

1st, How the Lord Jesus has removed all difficulties out of the way, and paved it for such a marriage betwixt him and you. And,

2^{dly}, How, in consequence of these steps, the union is formed betwixt Christ and a particular saint. Consider, in the

FIRST place, That, in order to pave the way for this relation, the Son of God took on him our nature; in so doing he shewed a love to it. He condescended to become our near Kinsman—he gave a token for good; but this is not all. This union of natures in the person of Christ, is, in some sort, the foundation of the union betwixt him and us. Here God comes near us, and condescends to deal with us by one who partakes of our own nature. As the Israelites feared to deal with God directly, and therefore prayed that he

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might speak to them by Moses; so God speaks to us by his Son in our nature. It is true that faith does not, cannot, separate the natures of Christ in its actings towards him; it views and receives both as one person: Hereby Christ is a full Mediator, laying his hand on both. God from eternity, became man in time! A proper centre where an offended God and offending men should meet! God to give, and we to receive the blessing: Fit it is that God should here look on us in the Face of his Anointed. This is a mystery indeed, and must be so—nor are we blasphemously to imagine that any branch of the human nature is brought near God in the same manner, or in the same degree, wherein the human nature of Christ is. The hypostatical union of the two natures in Christ, and the mystical union of Christ and believers, are two very different things; but the one makes way for the other. In Christ the human nature was raised to the highest degree of glory to which it could go. This, perhaps, the Psalmist has in his eye, Psal. viii. This is a token of love to our nature, and a preface of the blessedness he will bestow upon our persons. But,

SECONDLY, The Lord Christ, in order to bring about this marriage and union, redeemed his people from the sentence and curse of the law. We were dead in law; justice had a claim on us; this behoved to be removed, in order to our becoming his in the way proposed. This the honour of God required; for God's perfections act in perfect harmony: His love would not have its full vent if his justice was still unsatisfied; therefore Christ undertakes to restore what he took not away: He took on himself the curse, and bore it by himself—*purging away our sins,*
 Heb.

Heb. i. 3. The law, being magnified and made honourable, has now nothing to say against the match; and Christ acquires a right to the Elect-finnners as his purchase.

THIRDLY, As Christ delivers from the curse of the law, in order to our being married to him; he destroys the power of Satan over us for the same purpose. Satan rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience—he holds them by possession; they are his captives; strong is the charm whereby he keeps them—And how shall the prey be taken from the mighty? Can God and Belial dwell together? How shall the stronghold then be taken in? The Lord Christ answers all this! He came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. *By death, (his own) he destroyed him that had the power of death*, Heb. ii. 14.; he defeated him; he pursued the roaring lion with the prey in his teeth: He fell, but when he fell he conquered—Thus the captive is delivered. We who remained at home are called to gather the spoil, Psal. lxxviii. 12. Glorious and happy tidings! *Blessed be he that came in the name of the Lord to save us*, Psal. cxviii. 26.

FOURTHLY, In order to bring about the marriage, Christ comes near us in the gospel; here he speaks to, and allures us; here his consent and will is declared: Say not, then, who shall go up to heaven? &c. This laid hold on by faith, makes a sure bargain, as is elsewhere shewn; and shall be afterwards further illustrated.

S E R M O N XXXII.

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

GOD has chosen his people, that he might shew in them the marvellous effects of his mercy, power, and grace—Mercy, in pardoning the offences, though great; power, in raising high when sunk exceeding low; grace, in bringing near to himself, in a surprising way, when we deserved to be kept at an eternal distance from him—The wonderfulness of his council, in bringing it about by Christ—by his stooping so low—by his taking on him the office of Mediator! This is God's design, and worthy of himself. The subject I have insisted on from these words, is an unfolding of this design; and how pregnant is it with blessings? Union with Christ is the dawning of everlasting day! The day of Espousals to him, is the rising of the morning star on the soul—All the birds of Paradise sing for joy at it! My design is, that you, through grace, may be brought to the fellowship of this mystery. And now, when we shall, if the Lord will, soon have an opportunity of coming to the Lord's Table, it is, in an especial manner, proper that we should consider the nature of these Espousals, which are there confirmed. I shewed, last Lord's day, how
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the Lord Christ has paved the way for our being espoused to him, in sundry particulars. In the

FIFTH place, I add, That in order to our being united to him, he has, as Mediator, received, and has power to send the Holy Spirit to possess the hearts of his people. The Holy Spirit is the bond of union—God dwells in us by his Spirit, 1 John iii. *ult.*; and if we have it not we are none of his. We are by nature infinitely unlike to Jesus—the image of Hell being on our souls. God would say of us in this situation, Bury these dead out of my sight; for what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What union, or communion, between perfect holiness and universal, total, impurity? Could he delight in us? Could we delight in him? No. This, then, would prove an impassable bar in the way, if a method were not fallen upon to renew us. Perhaps, O Christian! thou hast often thought so, and doubtest yet how thou shalt be put among the children. Jesus, who calls thee to this relation, will make thee all glorious within—make thee like himself, by giving thee that Spirit that dwelt in himself; thou shalt from his fulness receive, and grace for grace: Hence Christ will delight to look on thee, and have pleasure in communion with thee. His image shall daily brighten, like the shining light, till it end in perfect day!—Blessed promise, *I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring!* Isa. xlv. 3. Blessed encouragement for poor souls, sensible of guilt and pollution, to lay hold on his strength, and enter into the bond of the covenant! Thus far, in general, Christ makes way for our being brought to himself. But now we are to view the matter more near, and consider, in the

SECOND

SECOND Place, *How this union is formed and brought about, in consequence of these steps, between the Lord Christ and a particular person.* Two things will comprehend what I design on this:

1st, The Lord Jesus's dealing with the heart, in making proposals and offers of mercy.

2^{dly}, The mutual consent of the parties, wherein these Espousals properly consist.

FIRST, There are proposals of mercy on the part of Jesus; and his alluring the soul to himself. HE goes out after the lost sheep; HE stands at the door of the heart and knocks; HE says, *Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night*—HE follows, perhaps, and knocks long; HE meets him in the still small voice of the gospel; HE waylays him, and hedges up his way with thorns; HE tries him with disappointments—HE sends out his servants to call him to the marriage, and compel him to come in! Hence are you beseeched to be reconciled to God. HE sends the Spirit, and the Spirit secretly says, *Come and drink of the waters of life freely!* The strong man within, meanwhile, roars, and is loath to quit his possession—Now he rages; and now puts on the form of an angel of light. Now he attempts to discredit Christ's offers; anon to persuade the soul that all is well already; and next, perhaps, to tax it with presumption, for daring to meddle with God's covenant: But the stronger man is come! HE who will not let his grace be resisted, works in the way of grace—HE who is of one mind, and who shall turn him? Now, I do not propose to enter minutely into this; as it corresponds with something delivered not long ago*. I just only notice these few particulars:

1st, The

* From 2 Cor. iv. 6.

1st, The Lord Jesus makes himself known in the fulness of his grace; he destroys the thick veil overspreading the soul—having made it feel its need, he shews something in himself corresponding thereto! God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the soul; then is Christ seen to be the Pearl of great price. What it had heard by the hearing of the ear, is now seen: New excellencies are also discovered; a fountain of precious blood to wash a guilty wretch—to stop the cry of conscience; a strong One raised up to rescue the poor soul—one able to save to the uttermost—one in whom nothing we need is wanting! But words cannot paint the light in which God shews himself in these respects! The sight is clear and distinct, my Brethren, and it is interesting. When in the region of destruction and death, we heard the same thereof with our ears; but now we are awake to see it, &c. Let it suffice to say, that the view Christ gives of himself eclipses the created glory of every thing; and sets the soul a wondering, looking, longing, and saying, *Give me Christ, or else I die!* But,

2^{dly}, The Lord Jesus kindly addresses himself to the soul, offering to do it good, and enter into covenant with it. Seeing the soul sick, he says, “Wilt thou be made whole?” Seeing it restless, he says, “Wilt thou come to me, O soul, and I will give thee rest! thou labourest in vain—thy wounds grow deeper; my bowels of compassion yern towards thee! I am come that the dead may live—that the blind may see! to save souls from deceit and violence! Wilt thou then live? Wilt thou become mine in a perpetual covenant?” Grace is in his lips, my Brethren; he speaks as never man spake! While he speaks, *He puts in his hand by the hole of the*

the door, Song v. 4. And thus he addressees himself to you all in his word—to the stout-hearted; to the ignorant; and chiefly, to the poor publican standing afar off, and afraid to lift up his eyes to heaven!

3dly, The Lord Christ, addressing himself thus, conquers the obstinacy of the heart against him and his way. There are high imaginations to be brought down—an obstinate will subdued: He complains of this in finners—*Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life!* This is a great part of our inward disease, that few are sensible of. Because most are willing not to go to hell, they think no objection can be made on this account; but there is a great difference between this and being willing to be saved in God's way—And, according to the nature and manner of his salvation, there is a willingness to yield to God in the whole of his covenant; to rest hereon; to be his servants; to take up with him as the soul's all, &c. This nature knows nothing of—this Christ brings about in a day of power; so that the heart desires him above all things, and as its chiefest joy—An happy symptom that Christ has dealt effectually!

4thly, He removes and answers all objections against this union, that are ready to rise in the poor sinner's heart. Satan and unbelief will not be wanting on this occasion to offer many. The archers shot fore at the soul, to prevent, if possible, its entering at the strait gate; but Jesus lets not the bar be insuperable. If it is urged how undeserving the soul is—how far such a privilege is above what such a wretch should hope for—“*Not for your sakes; but for my name's sake*, saith the Lord. My thoughts are not to be measured by yours, nor am I such an one as you.” Thus saith the Lord, *I will betroth thee unto me for ever.*

ever: This answers all. If peculiar apostasies from duty are objected—Then says the Lord, Therefore will “I allure, and bring into a wilderness, and speak comfortably: I will put thee, for this very reason, beyond “the reach of final apostasy; because thou hast such “a slippery heart,” &c. If it be objected—“I fear he “speaks not to me; I would give all the world he “did,” &c.: Then says the Spirit, “To thee is the “word of this salvation sent.” If it is objected—“I am “a more fit companion for devils, than to be a Spouse “to Christ.” He answers this also, “I will make thee “fair and lovely; I will give thee a new heart; I will “sanctify the temple for myself; I will lay the foundation, I will also put on the copestone; and mine “shall be all the glory.” O these are glad tidings of great joy! and Christ knows how to give these things their proper weight: His word has a power in it; it is the voice of a King; yea, that of God, and not of man! Hence it reaches to the bottom of the soul, and satisfies it. I do not say that equal clearness, in this matter, is every Christian’s attainment. Some fight their way through great opposition, and seize the kingdom by violence—strong love and desire push them forward; yet even such, Christ is taking by the hand and teaching to go.

* K k SERMON

S E R M O N XXXIII.

Hosea ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

[Being, since writing the notes of last discourse, long afflicted by a gracious God; and, since my recovery, having preached, at the call of Providence, on another text; I now resume this, desiring to do it under the influence, and hoping for the blessing from the Lord, to whose glory I desire to dedicate myself, and all my poor services.]

IN the last discourse on this subject, I shewed you, my Brethren, That Christ makes his proposals to the heart—deals with it, and opens it. Now there follows upon this, another general head to be considered; namely, The mutual consent of the parties to one another—of Jesus to the soul, and the soul to Jesus. It is this that makes a marriage among men; and for this reason, among others formerly mentioned, it is called *a marriage*; (I mean the union is) because it is made up by this consent. Now the consent of Jesus is given to the soul in the word; there the marriage-covenant is extended, and the giving it to a particular soul, is just the application of the offer and promise of the covenant to one, by the Holy Ghost; as when Christ says, *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*: It is just the covenant sealed by Christ's blood, and witnessed by his Holy Spirit; it is this that apprehends

hends the soul, and is apprehended by it. Much of the manner of this consent of Christ will fall in under next head. At present let me observe, that it takes in,

FIRST, To take the soul to himself as his—*I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. Thou shalt not be for another, so will I also be for thee.* God chooses his people for his peculiar treasure. All nature is his; the angels are his—his as their Creator and Master; but he takes, and consents to take his people to him by a new name, *His redeemed ones*: He consents to make it so—to be himself the Author of the blessed relation, that it may stand. The soul was formerly sold, and a captive—Now, thus saith the Lord, *I who have power to redeem will make thee mine!* your covenant with death shall be dissolved, and your league with hell shall not stand; I will take possession of thee; I will sanctifie thee, and make thee a vessel of honour to myself!

SECONDLY, The Lord Christ condescends to stand under particular relations to the soul—"Thou shalt not only be mine, but thou shalt call me Father; I will be his Father, and he shall be my son; I will pity thee, as a Father; I will chastise thee in love, as a Father—Thou shalt call me thy husband; I will be related to thee most intimately; I will never leave thee; I will dwell with thy soul; I will love thee to everlasting; I will come under the obligation of a bond to thee; I will give thee a right to claim every needful blessing from me; I will be thy portion; thou shalt find in me thy all, all that thy heart can desire—I will be thy Shepherd, I consent to be so; thou shalt not want!" In a word, Whatever dear names God takes to himself in the

word, these are the matter of his consent to his people; and mark, though the consent is mutual, the ground of all is in God himself; we apprehend as we are apprehended—he does it freely; he swears to this, his consent to be thine! Happy art thou who art saying, Oh, that he were saying so to me!

THIRDLY, The Lord consents to draw the soul to himself, and give grace to apprehend him. Would you, O soul, fain know this? Would you give the world this was the case, because you fear it stick with you here? I say Christ consents to do this. The Church put up a prayer to him—*Draw me, we will run after thee*, Song i. 4.: This was a prayer dictated by the Spirit of Christ, who dictates none that are not correspondent to the sure mercies of the covenant.—“Oh, I cannot come! Oh, if Christ would draw me! “I fear I shall fall by the way: Oh, to be led by his “hand!” Why, Christ is ready as thou couldst wish! —Let him lay hold on my strength! God calls to nothing in the way of duty, but he promises in the way of grace. Christ knows, and says, *Without me, ye can do nothing*; sure you know the meaning of this. What means God, when he promises a new heart—a believing heart? Is it not a consent of the nature? I have said. What means the particular promise of faith?—*They shall look on me*, &c. O Christian! this is one of the articles of thy Husband’s consent! Take it, for he calls thee! I add, in the

FOURTH place, That he consents to make over all his purchase, and the blessings of it, to the soul he is dealing with. See this expressed in terms—*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*, Isa. lv. 3.: He

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not only consents to do this, but to do it under the form of a covenant—to make the blessings pleasurable and sure; he gives himself—and shall he not give all things? He has purchased the inheritance for and with a view to his Spouse; and shall she not be put in possession of it? He condescends to unfold these sure mercies—and behold, an unsearchable treasure of riches and righteousness! Of pardon—*And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more,* Jer. xxxi. 34.: Of sanctification—*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh,* &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.: Of glory—*In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began,* Tit. i. 2. And as Christ is declared to be the heir of all things; his offer, promise, and covenant run in the most extensive terms!—*The Lord shall give that which is good,* Psal. lxxxv. 12. And in this it must be remembered, that Christ views us, as we really are, utterly fallen and lost, unable to do one right thing of ourselves; and therefore brings with him all that we need for time and eternity.

FIFTHLY, He consents to warrant and approve this Covenant as a sure bargain; and the believer's interest in it as unshaken for ever—*I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David,* Isa. lv. 3. *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed:*

moved: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee, Isa. liv. 10. He is of one mind, and who shall turn him! his people find many times the effects of this—*I, the Lord, change not; therefore ye are not consumed!* Hither we must look for the wonderful preservation of the life of grace—mercy in the midst of provocation—quickening from spiritual death, &c. But this will be more largely opened in the progress of these discourses, if the Lord will. If it be asked how this consent on Christ's part is perceived? I answer, By faith. If it be asked, Why does not all perceive it? or, why do not God's people always perceive it? Answer, Because the Spirit of God is free in his operations. And here we must distinguish betwixt an universal offer, and universal redemption; the first is certain, the last false. *In a word*, Sinners refuse, disbelieve; and are damned. Saints receive, believe; and are saved.

SERMON

SERMON XXXIV.

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

HAVING shewn you the gracious offers of the Lord Christ, as reduced into the form of a covenant and consent. It remains, on this head, to consider that exercise in the mind of the believer, that corresponds thereunto; namely, The believer's consent to Christ. This, in a word, is expressed in the exercise of faith. Faith, in its general nature, is an exercise of heart corresponding to the gospel, as a record, as a promise, as a testimony concerning Christ, containing gracious offers; as a covenant given to the people, &c.—it is useful to consider it under all its various lights. I must now speak of it as the soul's consent to the marriage-covenant, made and proposed by Christ. And here I choose to lay before you, in order,

1st, The matter of this consent. And,
2^{dly}, The distinguishing properties of it. As to the matter of it,

FIRST, The heart and soul consent to be the Lord's. Jesus consents to make it his, as I said. Now the consent of the heart follows his, in every respect; for he is the Maker of the covenant—the proposer of
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all the terms: Therefore the sum of the obedience of faith is, a being made willing in a day of his power, Psal. cx. 3. Apostate angels and men set up for an independence. Satan tempted our first parents with this bait—*Ye shall be as gods*. Wicked and natural men still say, *Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?* Self is the spring, and self is the end of all their actions. In the mean time, they are the slaves of corruption—do Satan's work; and, if grace prevents not, will receive his wages—even death. Now, Christ comes to set us free from Satan; to bring us to God—to reconcile us to the centre of our rest and blessedness! The soul sees this; is pleased with his design, pleased with the manner of executing it; and hence says, *I am the Lord's*, Isa. xlv. 5. Thus the design of Christ's death is fulfilled in it—*He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again*, 2 Cor. v. 15. "Thou, O Redeemer, comest to open prison doors—to gather straying sheep—taking the prey from the mighty; I have struggled under my chains in vain, being rather worse than better: O do thy own work here!—amen. I am thine; I will be thine; other lords have had dominion over me, but, through thy offered grace, I will now only make mention of thy name." This would indeed go for nothing, if Christ is not viewed in it. Many fair promises were, perhaps, made before, and not one of them ever kept, and the soul was no nearer God for them all: But in this, there is an apprehending of Christ—a casting of the burden over on him; there is a faith's view of and respect to gospel grace as held forth, and surely to be given—in a word, To Christ's consent, as already pronounced.

Thus

Thus it is distinguished from legal false work—where the work is daubed with untempered mortar; where the fruit withereth, because the root is rottenness. Here the soul is put in Christ's hands, and cannot be plucked out of it. But,

SECONDLY, The soul, through the working of Divine grace, consents to stand in certain new relations to the Lord Christ; these are proposed in the covenant, as above expressed. The believer is pleased with them; and therefore chuses Christ as his spiritual husband, Rom. vii. 4. The Holy Ghost represents us as, in our natural estate, married to the law as a covenant of works; but there is no life by it; yea, if we continue married to it, it has power over us to death: But Christ has power to divorce us from it; he comes to do so, that we may be married to himself; *i. e.* be united to him in the bond of a covenant, so as to have fellowship with him in his grace. This the heart is pleased with, and consents not only to share of his benefits, and be washed in his blood, but to be spiritually related to him—to be possessed by his Spirit, and be a member of his mystical body; hence the Apostle, *Counts all things but loss and dung, that he may be found in him*, Phil. iii. 9. And here, perhaps, lies the root of a difference between saints and sinners—hypocrites; the latter desire some of Christ's benefits, desire them as an upmaking of their loss by the fall—desire them selfishly, that they may be set firm on the old foundation of a covenant of works: But when a spiritual union with Christ is proposed, it is foolishness to their understandings—*How shall this man give us his flesh to eat?* Jo. vi. God's people, on the other hand, take Christ, and with him all things, Rom. viii. 34. And this is God's chosen

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and approven way ; they are made to love him—delight in him ; and therefore they desire to be with him : They say, “ Let us be called by thy name, “ to take away our reproach ! Look on us as thy “ Spouse ; set me as a seal on thy heart, and a signet “ on thine arm.” Oh ! my Brethren, consider that it is a rejecting of Christ that is the damning sin of the world—They see no beauty in him why he should be desired ; and so the stone is rejected by the builders, which is declared to be the head of the corner : Hence damnation comes on unbelievers to the uttermost. I have enlarged on this article, in regard the text leads chiefly to it. But we must not neglect to observe, That Christ’s Spouse gives likewise a full consent to his offer, with respect to every other relation wherein he stands to his people ; hence we find faith echoing its consent to every thing whereby he lays hold on the poor soul—calling him, My glory, and the lifter up of my head ; my Shepherd—I shall not want ; my hiding place, and rock ; and my portion for ever. Remember the heart is known by the choice it makes ; and examine what is its deliberate voice. But, in the

THIRD place, The soul consents to be wholly saved in God’s own way. Whatever men unacquainted with their own hearts may think, this is no such easy matter. Balaam could say, *Let me die the death of the righteous.* The young man in the gospel could say, *What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* This is the voice of nature shrinking from its own misery ; one needs nothing but nature to teach it. But consider, man, what it is thou wantest : Is it the pardon of sin, because it separates between God and thee, whom thou wouldst have fellowship with ? Is it to have

have thy nature made like unto his? Is it that Christ may reign in and over thee? and that he only may do it? Is it that God may root out that accursed thing that makes thee hate thyself? Then art thou seeking God's salvation indeed, and a whole salvation. Again, he is pleased with God's way of saving, and consents thereto. Salvation in the Lord Christ—by his blood—through his Spirit—in a covenant way; and if God shall see meet to chastise and afflict, to make sin bitter; if he pleases to lay me low in the dust, that his name may be exalted, though I be made a proverb, &c.—good is the will of the Lord. *Finally*, Is he to lead me through paths that I know not, and where I may think this cannot be for my good; I desire to have no will of my own, but to yield to his: All this, indeed, and what goes before, supposes the person to be led by the Holy Ghost, and apprehended by Christ in the way of grace, and breathing forth the favour of these graces.

FOURTHLY, The soul, under Divine influence, consents to abide with Christ for ever. Christ says, *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*—The soul answers, Amen! Let me be implanted, never to be cut off; let mine ear be nailed to the door-post; let not one hour be reserved for sin; I bid adieu, a willing adieu to Sodom, desiring not to look back. When death divides soul and body, let this union remain indissoluble: When the heavens are gathered like a scroll, and the sun is put out by the breath that kindled it; let my rest and portion be with God, and let the praises of his name, and his blessed service, be my employment through eternity.

FIFTHLY, The soul consents to take, and is pleased with the security that Christ gives in his word of pro-

mise, for the stability and certainty of this marriage-contract, and that both for his part and ours. The fountain of our life is without us, and in Christ: His engagement is both—*I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* It is vain to pretend to faith without trust. Christ's promise is a faithful saying, and if we know his name savingly, we will trust him, Psal. ix. 10. "Lord, this that thou hast said" is a faithful saying and worthy of acceptation: "I have chosen thy testimonies as my heritage for ever—God hath spoken in his holiness; herein" will I take pleasure," &c. Unbelief speaks strong against this—requires a sign from heaven—cannot think of following an unseen God; but the fountain of light has given light, and the day of power made a willing people: Such is the consent, wrought in the believer's heart by the Spirit of grace. I own every one does not feel its actings with great distinctness; our minds are limited, and when strongly possessed with one thing—with one particular view, perhaps, of Christ in the promise, cannot so distinctly take in a great compass; but this is no ground of doubting: See if the foundation be laid well—if thou art made truly willing, &c. And in order to lead thee right in this matter, let me next give the distinguishing properties of this consent, for trial and direction.

1st, The soul's consent to Christ is unfeigned, and without guile—*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. God requires the heart in all religious duties: How much more especially does he say here, *My Son, give me thine heart.* An ordinary evidence of this uprightness is a jealousy the person entertains of himself. It is a strong evidence one is in earnest about a thing, when they think they cannot

cannot get to earnestness enough: Hence cries the Psalmist, *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me*, Psal. xxvi. 2.—“ I would not play false for the world, but “ I fear myself; though there be no allowed guile, yet “ I am afraid of its being lying hid someway out of “ fight.” There are indeed many whose religion fits very easy on them: These I own I must suspect; I think I have ground for it; for wo to them that are at ease in Zion. As for those that have a divided heart, they are found faulty, Hof. x. 2. And as for these who think to do the business with words, what they mean I know not; but I know that the god of this world hath sadly blinded their eyes.

2dly, This consent is full and without reserve—not only the heart, but the whole heart is in it; and the whole, I may say, of God’s offer is in the heart! There is not an Achan spared if he be known; there is no asking of liberty to bow in the house of Rimmon, like Naaman the Syrian, 2 Kings v. 18. The poor soul it may-be feels, and feels deeply, that sin has a strong hold of it; it mourns that it has so; but so much the more cries, O Lord, let this capital enemy be the first sacrifice; let this right eye be plucked out—this right hand cut off—What have I to do with idols! Again, There is no reserve as to the covenant, it is well ordered in all things; the promises are full, suitable, and sure, says the soul. Christ comes with pardon in one hand for my iniquity, and with fetters in the other to bind my lusts, those late bosom friends. If it were possible that I behoved to be put on my choice, to want one of the blessings, I could not say which I could part with. These I propose only as a specimen, and observe,

3dly,

3dly, That the believer's consent flows from a discovery that Christ is in earnest. I shewed formerly that he makes this to appear. Christian faith is not irrational—it is not a leap in the dark, though it may indeed struggle against the darkness of unbelief; yet it must some way go on the sure foundation of the word. Nor is this at all contrary to the call—*Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, Isa. l. 10.* Nor is it inconsistent with the reality of that faith that says, *Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.* But what remains must be illustrated when the Lord gives another opportunity.

SERMON

S E R M O N X X X V .

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

IT is of the highest importance for us to know what spirit we are of in every duty and exercise; especially in those solemn transactions with God, wherein we lay hold on his covenant, or renew our hold of it. Many return, but not to the most high; hence they dream that they eat, but awake, and behold all is naught. It is the more needful we be set right in this matter, because faith is not a single act only, but to be the continued exercise of our lives. I have already shewn you some of the properties of a right clo-
sing with, or consenting to Christ. I add, in the

FOURTH place, That the soul's consent to Jesus is humble and self-denying. It is humble in a view of its own unworthiness, and self-denying in a view of its own weakness and ignorance; this runs through every duty, and is the clothing of every grace—but here it shines particularly. The person sees himself poor and miserable, &c.; that God owes him nothing but wrath—*And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*, Luke xv. 21.—hence he comes to take the water of life, because it is free—bowing to sovereignty; contented to be indebted to
grace

grace for ever. If this blessed privilege of union with Christ exalts God, it depresses the poor man—"Oh! "I am vile; God be merciful to me a sinner! I appear before thee as a poor sinner; I have nothing "but sin that I can call my own." Hence, when God's Spirit describes the man with whom he will dwell, it is the humble and contrite; the prepared heart and heard desire is that of the humble, Psal x. 17. Analogous to this, or a branch of it, is that self-denial spoke of. To this our Lord seems to refer, Matth. xviii. 3—19. There faith is a kind of self-denial—it is a putting our burden on Christ; and the soul, in the exercise of it, distrusts itself and depends on sovereign grace. This is beautifully described in the language of the Spouse, Cant. i. 4. Says she, We will run—but how? Draw me, I will do it. There is at once a coming to Christ, and an asking and deriving power from him to come; nor is there, perhaps, a better symptom of right faith than this. O it is sweet, when we look on ourselves as little children, to view everlasting arms underneath us!

Other particulars might have been added to these; but, in their stead, before I proceed to the next general head, suffer me, my brethren, to deal freely with you in the way of expostulation on what has been said. Our great work is to win souls to Christ; we must compel them to come in. What has been said might, through grace, shew you the door of mercy: You have heard of Christ's consent; of the soul's consent; of this spiritual marriage. May I now ask you what have been your thoughts of this matter? Have you slept over it? Has the evil one already taken it out of your minds!—I have called you to the marriage of the Lamb; I have in part laid the marriage-covenant before

before you—you have heard the words of the Eternal! What shall I think of you? Dare I suppose that any of your hearts have said, amen?—that any former stranger, hypocrite or profane, has been sweetly drawn? God grant this may be the case! But in the mean time, suffer me to reason a little, closely, with you concerning these matters; and hear that your souls may live.

1st, Possibly some may have looked on the whole matter as a cunningly devised fable, imagining that union with Christ is something not worth hearing about; that these thoughts, foregoing, only take place in weak heads, or at least contain a kind of religion above what they resolve to trouble themselves about. Hide thyself as thou wilt, God's word will find thee out!—a sure sign that his hand will find thee out another day. Well, art thou aware of thy being a blasphemer! Knowest thou who hears the hard speeches, in thy heart?—If thou thinkest there is a Saviour at all, it is not the Saviour spoken of in the gospel thou dealest with; perhaps thou hast a foolish scheme of thy own, whereby thou lookest for salvation; but God's salvation it seems thou settest at defiance—wretched case! The stone which thou despisest will fall on thee, and grind thee to powder. Oh, pray God that thy thoughts may be forgiven! Oh, become as a little child, that thou mayest enter into the kingdom of heaven!

2^{dly}, There are, perhaps, some who look on this doctrine as a pleasant sound, but go no further; they are pleased with the entertainment set before them, and think it something marvellous; (so indeed the Jews did with Christ's doctrine); but their hearts look to Christ as Balaam said he would do, when he be-

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held him, but not nigh; it is not heart-work with them to be brought to Christ. What, my Brethren, are you to take up your dwelling in the suburbs of the city of refuge! I assure you the avenger of blood will find you there! Christ asks your hearts, not only to be witnesses of his marriage, but to be married to him. Awake then, and arise; the Master calls thee! Christ offers thee his hand—Soul, wilt thou be made whole? Hast thou had any view of Christ then? Oh, arise—sign and seal the marriage-covenant, lest thou be found among those, John xv. 24. who have both seen and hated Christ. But,

3dly, Perhaps there are some, who, when hearing this blessed offer on Christ's part, and acceptance on the saints part, and when their hearts are called for, have a portion already which they are satisfied with, or a bosom lust which they cannot part with; therefore they say, "Have me excused; I am married to the world; I am in league with sin, &c.; If my heart craves any thing, it is, Who shall shew us any earthly good?" Psal. iv. 6. Therefore they say they cannot come. And is Jesus then despised in thine eyes? Darest thou harbour the thought, and not consider that it is Satan that fills thy heart? Oh, if thou knewest the Gift of God, sinner! Wonder that God, when he hearkens and hears the thoughts of thy heart, does not strike thee dead at once!—he sees thy day coming. Oh think—thou nurdest the serpent that will sting thee to death! Thou art already dying—Look to Christ, bringing grace that thou mayest live.

4thly, Some, while they hear of this transaction believe not that they are any way concerned in it; they think Christ speaks not to them—that he will not consent

consent to be theirs ; and therefore stand aloof from him ; they think they need not give any answer, because the question belongs not to them, but to others, &c. What wouldst thou, O sinner, that Christ should do to shew that he is in earnest ? Wouldst thou have a sign from heaven ? Should Christ himself descend to tell thee once more ? Or should an angel be the messenger of his will ! Alas ! if thy heart were not changed, thou wouldest not even then believe. Have we not a dispensation of grace called superior even to the ministry of angels ? Heb. ii. 2, 3. Is it not the word of salvation sent to thee ? Hast thou not been called on as a sinner, a backslider, a sick soul ? &c. Then see that you refuse not him that speaketh.

5thly Some perhaps are for delaying to deal with God, on various pretences ; they think it time enough—*yet a little sleep, a little slumber, &c.* ; or perhaps alledge that the gale of the Spirit does not now blow, they will therefore wait for a more convenient season. Beware, O sinner, for here thousands perish !—thou sleepest as on the top of a mast ! Grieve not the Spirit of Christ ; strive not against his motions, lest he strive with thee no more. Sayest thou thy heart is cold now, and the Spirit does not blow ? What ! was not the lame man bid arise ; and the man with the withered hand stretch it out ?—Is not the command as real to thee ? Is not the fulness of the Spirit with Christ ?—Say then, Master, at thy word I will let down the net. He commands thee to do it—look unto him, then, and his strength shall be perfected in thy weakness : And may God himself shew thee the path of Life, Amen.

S E R M O N XXXVI.

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

THE calling of the Lord's people is truly high and honourable, though there are few who, through grace, are enabled to receive it. The blessings of it are great, substantial, and real. The encouragements to take on Christ's yoke are innumerable. While awful terrors proceed from the presence of God to alarm sinners, and to sweep away the refuges of lies; how does the promise, at the same time, comfort and direct—how alluring are gospel offers, coming to the chief of sinners? The language of the text is of this kind, presenting you, my Brethren, with a joyful sound—union with Christ, by a marriage-covenant well ordered and sure.—Already we have considered the *Nature* and *Blessedness* of this spiritual Marriage; the way wherein it is brought about, and have dealt with you to lay it seriously to heart. We now proceed to the

THIRD thing proposed, viz. *Shortly to explain the circumstances and tenor of this Marriage-covenant, as said to be made in righteousness, in judgment, in loving-kindness, in mercies, and in faithfulness.* Here a wide field would open, were it fit to pursue it to the utmost;

most; but this is not our design. As all God's words are weighty, so especially those pronounced with respect to such a privilege must not be slightly passed over—God's people must not want the comfort of them. We shall explain, illustrate, and improve these circumstances, or parts of God's promise, in the order wherein they lie in the text.

FIRST, Thus saith the Lord, *I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness.* The word righteousness is of various acceptations in scripture. When it is spoken with respect to man, sometimes it means justice and equity; often it means the inherent grace wrought by the Spirit—that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. iv. 24.; very often the imputed righteousness of Christ—for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom. x. 4. When spoken of God, it sometimes means, more confinedly, his faithfulness in promising and performing, and even in threatening and punishing, Psal. xxxi. 1.; but this does not seem to be its sense here. It is taken rather, I think, in a larger sense, as in many other places of scripture—*The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright*, Psal. xi. 7. *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*, Psal. xlv. 7. It signifies here, agreeably to the scope, “ I will betroth thee unto me
“ in a way agreeable to the holiness and perfection of
“ my nature. While I condescend to seek, and take
“ a creature near unto me—a sinner, an unworthy
“ sinner, for my Spouse, I do it in a way worthy of
“ myself, not sacrificing (which is on all accounts impossible) the holiness or dignity of my nature, in order
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“der to deliver thee. Nay, know it for thy comfort; “I can and will save thee, and bring thee to myself, “so as to bring glory to myself in doing so.” Whatever might be supposed to be included in the word is evidently comprehended in the following expressions. I confine myself, therefore, to this view of it at present. I shall first illustrate this doctrinally; and then briefly point out the improvement of it. Observe, in the

1st place, That Christ’s betrothing a soul to himself is done in righteousness; for in it he acts agreeably to the perfection of his nature, and in a way of sovereignty—though he comes low in condescension, he does not strip himself of his uncreated glory; he acts as God over all, and blessed for ever: Yea, every thing he says or does bespeaks his eternal Godhead; the arm of power that is omnipotent is put forth, felt, and perceived in conversion; the love and grace is plainly divine: He may well say of it to the soul, Thou mayest know, by my goodness to thee, that I am God and not man—the whole matter is a wonder, and bespeaks a God! He shews it in his sovereignty and eternal dominion; he passes by fallen angels altogether, he passes by many like thyself—he comes and calls thee, because such is his will and pleasure; shewing his glory most, when doing thee, poor sinner, most good.

2^{dly}, God says, *I will betroth thee to me in righteousness*, because his holiness is not to be injured, but illustrated, by this union; in regard that he gives thee the wedding-garment of Christ’s righteousness. God saith, *I will be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*, Rom. iii. 26. Thou art vile and polluted—guilty of treason against me; thy sins are as scarlet (for God does not think lightly of sin). It may

may seem strange to thee how a righteous God and you can dwell together; but *I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness*—I will clothe thee with a robe fairer than thy own innocence could have been; my grace shall be glorified in giving it to thee, and my holiness manifested in taking thee on such terms. So the law is magnified, and God is well pleased with the sinner for his righteousness sake.

3dly, It may be said that God betroths the soul to himself in righteousness, in regard, that, in taking it to himself, he consents to give, and actually gives the sanctifying Spirit to make it holy and pure, like as God is holy. At the same time that he says *I will betroth thee unto me*, he says also, *I will give thee a clean heart and a right spirit*. Two cannot walk together in communion except they be agreed, and somehow alike. Now, I will put my Spirit in you, says the Lord Christ, and this is as much the matter of promise as the betrothing itself is: So God's people are said to be *chosen to sanctification*, 2 Thes. ii. 13. They are called a *holy people*, Isa. lxiii. 12.—whatever unfitness is in thee, I will remove it, saith the Lord. Hence the Psalmist exults, through grace, *I shall behold thy face in righteousness*, Psal. xvii. 15. O, my Brethren, it is sweet to see a promising God supplying our wants—making his way and covenant clear like the sun, so that poor sinners cannot find one flaw in it!—But I purposely abridge this, that I may add some *practical reflections*.

FIRST, Let what has been said teach you to entertain high and honourable thoughts of God. The grace of God never did, never can, never must feed pride; even the souls who are taken nearest him will humble themselves most before him; the more sensi-
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ble nearness there is, in proportion to it the more humility—I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear (says Job): but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes, Job xlii. 5. So the Cherubims, that are about the mercy-seat, cover their faces, and cry, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*, Isa. vi. 3. Think and speak highly of God. Remember thou art dust and ashes. Think what thou wast formerly; and let filial fear and Christian joy go together.

SECONDLY, From what has been said you may see what judgment is to be formed of those who, instead of improving the promise and grace of God for the advancement of holiness, do turn both into wantonness, and take occasion to sin because grace has abounded; and, in hopes of forgiveness, fear not to transgress!—Ah! my Brethren, you may see whether God has laid a foundation for such hopes; God calls you to sanctification through the Spirit. Christ comes to pull Satan out of the heart. You pretend to employ him to keep Satan in your hearts—horrid blasphemy!—Shall not God avenge himself of such adversaries of his grace, that not only defy his justice, but throw, as it were, the blood of Christ back in his face! (I tremble to say it.)

THIRDLY, Adore that grace, O Christian! whereby the perfections of the Divine nature, and the salvation of thy soul are so happily reconciled. Can God bethroth thee to himself in righteousness? Does he offer to do so, wretched as thou art? How blessed is the expedient?—how worthy of practical approbation?—how should it encourage thee to place thy soul on a bottom where God's honour and thy salvation are both safe? Come and see—come and try; and may the Lord lead thee to himself. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N XXXVII.

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

THERE is no part of the revelation of God's will concerning our salvation but what has much instruction in it. The language of the Spirit of God is peculiarly emphatical, and no word wants its meaning: Hence we are commanded to search the scriptures; yea, to dig for the hidden treasure contained in them. When treating, from this text, of the great spring of a Christian's blessedness, I would not have you to take a transient view of it; but to weigh its several circumstances thoroughly, turning yourselves to its various sides, &c. You will remember, I proposed to explain, briefly, the *Tenor* of the believer's marriage-covenant, as made in righteousness, judgment, loving-kindness, mercies, and faithfulness. I have already shewn you how it is made in *righteousness*.

SECONDLY, We are, in the *next* place, called to hear God saying, *I will betroth thee unto me in judgment*. This word, as the former, has various significations in scripture, as differently applied. Sometimes it signifies a sentence simply, Rom. ii. 3. v. 18. Sometimes dealing with one strictly as he deserves, Psal. cxliii. 2. It is obvious none of these can be meant

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here. I take it (perhaps among other things) to mean the depth of wisdom and contrivance ; to be an expression of the glorious fitness and suitableness there is in God's dealings with a sinner, to manifest his glory—the harmony of all the parts of the blessed covenant, as all tending to one end ; and the suitability of it to the circumstances of the poor fallen sinner. Though not spoke to the same purpose, yet I imagine there is some analogy to this sense in the use of the word, Psal. lxxii. 1. Job xxxiv. 4. It is certain, that the salvation of sinners, by Christ, is the standing miracle of Divine wisdom. Christ is called the WISDOM of God ; he is wise in heart and wonderful in counsel ! And he may be said to betroth a sinner to himself in the depth of wisdom, judgment, and counsel, in the following respects :

1st, His design of grace is laid so deep, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it ! His Eternal purpose puts it beyond the reach of Satan ; for his council shall stand. He foresaw and decreed every circumstance relative to the sinner ; his misery—his recovery, and the means of it ; the opposition to it, and the triumph over that opposition. Let Satan rage as he will, God will but thereby magnify himself the more ! He laid our help on Christ—by the constitution of his person he is allied to our nature. This is the Rock spoken of Mat. xvi. 18. ; and this the grand step towards union with believers. Satan tried the man Christ with temptations, but in vain ; he tried all his strength against him at different times : He followed him to the cross ; but it was impossible for Christ's work to miscarry in his hands, or for his hold of the human nature to be dissolved, or his hold of his people who were with him—*These whom thou hast given*

given me I have kept, and none of them are lost. In like manner, all his attempts with respect to Christ's mystical body, of which Christians are members, must prove abortive; because they live, triumph, and are saved in and by their Head, who is Immanuel.

2dly, God betrothes his people to himself in the depth of wisdom and judgment, in regard that the grace of the marriage-covenant is so full, that a fatal breach can be made on them no where! He knew that we were wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, guilty and weak. He knew Satan would attack them from without, and more powerfully from within, by legions of lusts and spiritual foes ever watchful. Adam was accessible, in a manner, only one way; we in many. Hence a full provision is made of promised grace—grace to the heart, to make it new—light to the eyes—a repenting spirit, and restoring grace when in danger of backsliding! And, on the whole, to be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation—That pardon, though unmerited, shall be bestowed; and that sanctification, though opposed, shall yet go on, &c.

3dly, As there is a fulness of purchased grace, so it is put in the hands of Christ, the Mediator, originally, that it may become forthcoming to us. It is put in his hands in the way of promise; it was promised that he should not fail—should see his seed; yea, all the promises of God are said to be in him, and hence are *yea and amen to us*, 2 Cor. i. 20. Hence they are sure to the seed given to Christ, Rom. iv. 16. From hence it arises that we are saved by being in Christ, and so joint-heirs with him; the blessing, being in his hand, shall surely descend on us. Now, from all this it appears how deeply the plan of grace is laid, and how

fully it answers God's design of glorifying himself—of saving his people beyond all peradventure! And from this we may draw the following reflections:

FIRST, What fools are they to whom the gospel of Christ is foolishness—who see no beauty in Christ wherefore they should desire him—nothing in his offers to recommend them to their choice. Surely, whatever endowments such persons may have had otherwise, their wisdom must be earthly and devilish. Pride and ignorance from hell beneath teach to despise Christ; but to those who are heaven-born and heaven-taught he is the WISDOM of God. A person may know his partaking of the Spirit or not, by his practical regards to the Covenant of Grace and Christ's promises: If his eyes are opened, he will see them full of grace, wisdom, and fitness; but if he looks at them through the darkness of a natural estate he will be offended in Jesus.

SECONDLY, From what has been said, We may see how worthy the plan of salvation is of its great Author! Infinite power triumphs in it, over the dominion of Satan. Infinite wisdom overthrows, with ease, the cunning of the old serpent—Infinite love triumphs over our unworthiness! All the Divine perfections are glorified on a subject (FALLEN MAN), where at first sight would appear to a finite nature, nothing but work for vindictive justice. What a comfort is it not only that it has pleased God to open a path to life, but to shew us, in part, that the satisfaction he expresses in it is worthy of himself! No doubt, it should be the saints exercise here, to look into these things; for it will be their work eternally hereafter.

THIRDLY, From what has been said, I may take occasion to recommend Christ to you all, as your soul's
everlasting

everlasting choice. You see God is glorified in him, and his salvation; and therefore rejoices in him as Mediator. Because God is this way glorified, you should likewise chuse and rejoice in him: And because the Wisdom of God not only dwells substantially in him, but is wrought particularly into the frame of his covenant, therefore it becomes a poor soul, sensible of its ignorance, in faith to commit itself to God; sure, that under the direction of his wisdom it shall not miscarry. It remains, according to the order of the text, to consider, in the

THIRD place, How God deals with the soul *in loving-kindness and tender mercies*. As every part of God's name is wrought into his covenant, so this particularly is: Hence he begins his name with it, Ex. xxxiv. 6. *Mercy and truth go before his face*. Loving-kindness is a word of a more general extent as to its object. Tender mercy respects the objects of the Divine love, as in misery. Agreeably to the brevity proposed, I shall, 1st, Shew, in a few observations, how God may be said to betroth to himself in *loving-kindness and tender mercies*. And then, 2^{dly}, As before, offer some reflections from them. As to the first,

FIRST, God says, *I will betroth thee to me in loving-kindness, &c.*; because Sovereign free love is the original source of the blessing—*I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee*, Jer. xxxi. 3. Nothing is more wonderful than this; nothing shews the excellency of the Divine perfections more. Let men talk of nature as they will, it is the work of his grace that shews a God most clearly. That a God infinitely blessed of himself, should think of poor creatures, the work
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of his hands, in this manner, and love them ere they had a being; none to recommend them—nothing to make them needed! This and other things might make the Apostle say, *The love of God passeth knowledge!* It was this love that opened in time in various promises—in the sending of Christ; and then in the conversion of the soul! Hence he follows thee long—bears much, and gives not over.

SECONDLY, God may say, *I will betroth thee to me in loving-kindness, &c.* in regard of his coming over mountains of provocations when doing the soul good. Every thing in us, naturally, is hateful and abominable—our natures, our lives, our thoughts! What a fight before a Holy God of pure eyes! But he looks on us in Christ—While he might justly say, *Depart ye cursed!* he says, *I will betroth thee to me in loving-kindness and tender mercies! I will forgive your transgressions; I will love you freely; I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake!*—Blessed and joyful sound! It is well, Lord, thou doest it in tender mercies, otherwise it could never take place in me at all. Hence the cursed malignity of unbelief trampling on such love as this!

THIRDLY, The Lord justly says, *I will betroth thee to me in loving-kindness;* because he expresses special delight and complacency in his people. The relation itself supposes something of this, as I shewed you, his expressions are answerable thereto—*I say unto you, that joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance!* Luke xv. 7. Hence he calls them his portion—his heritage—his jewels—his peculiar treasure! It is not possible for any created being fully to comprehend the depth of grace that is herein—

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God the Father rejoicing in the return of a lost son—in the product of his eternal love! The Son of God rejoicing in the travail of his soul accomplished—his blessed image stamped on the poor creature—a monument of grace raised up! God the Holy Ghost delighting in the work of his hands—the dawns of eternal light, and God resting in his love—*Loving, he loves to the end!*

FOURTHLY, God betrothes the soul to himself in *loving-kindness*, &c.; for therein he bestows blessings worthy of his eternal love. He gives himself, an infinite good—a blessing worthy of infinite goodness! He says, “I will be thy God—Thou shalt look on me in Christ, and say, *My Lord, and my God!*” When considering all the blessed perfections of my nature, thou shalt see thyself interested in them: My wisdom thy guide; my power thy shield; my mercy thy refuge; my faithfulness thy security, &c.; all “under the blessed relation of a covenant.” God said, *Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*, Gen. xv. 1. When he says, *I am thy God*, methinks he says all: So Christ giving himself, gives all things—a precious treasure, just entered on by faith; the righteousness, the Spirit, the promises of God, and eternal life as a free gift. These, O Christian, are the tokens of thy Husband’s love!

FIFTHLY, From all these it follows, that every Christian is a living monument of the loving-kindness and tender mercies of God. God designs that mercy shall be built up for ever. That it may be truly a building of mercy, he takes the pillars of it from among the ruins of wretched human nature! So will he be eternally glorified in his saints, and admired

mired in them that believe. On these things, I add the following reflections :

1st, From what has been said, Let Christians see how much they are bound to love God—*We love him, for he first loved us!* Consider, my Brethren, what his love to you has been—*great and passing knowledge!* Angels wonder at it—knowing no instances of the like among themselves; for they are not sinners. Consider it—from everlasting to everlasting! a few links of the chain you see: On one hand it is from everlasting backwards, to everlasting forwards! Think how undeserved! Think what mountains it has come over!—what guilt pardoned!—guilt of mercy trampled on! Oh, can you say, this God has loved me? Then you will make the improvement yourselves; your hearts will devise lovely thoughts of him. O come here and light the decayed flame, fallen Christian, at this altar!

2^{dly}, Let the love of God, my friends, teach you likewise humility, while you remember how you are made to differ from others—*It is because, even so Father it seemed good in thy sight.* Think what thou wast—*vile and polluted!* Where hadst thou been if God had let thee alone?—going with the herd; perhaps lifting up thine eyes in torments!—Look with pity on sinners; pray for them; call them to the fellowship of your Saviour,

3^{dly}, Think what need thou hast of loving-kindness and tender mercies; and bless God for making this, and not merit, the ground of taking thee to himself—
 “ Lord, this is such a saying, and such grace as I would
 “ chuse; if ever saved at all, it behoved to be in
 “ mercy and loving-kindness. What a mercy that
 “ thou takest poor beggars? yea worse, rebels to thy-
 “ self?

"self? Mercy mixed in with thy consent, looks
"kindly on me, and encourages me to accept of it!
"On the whole, thy will be done, O Lord." When
Satan stands to resist thee, and unbelief pretends that
thou hast no title to put thy name to the covenant.
Answer with this—There is mercy, pardoning mercy
here: Hence I conclude there is room. Mercy has
come before his face; it dispels my fears, and encour-
ages my faith.—This God shall be my God for ever
and ever, and my guide even unto death. *Amen.*

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SERMON

S E R M O N XXXVIII.

HOSEA ii. 19, 20.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness.

THE glorious Gospel of the blessed God discovers an inexhaustible fulness of excellency and grace in the Lord Christ—a fulness answering our emptiness and misery: Hence, to a believer, his name, in every part of it, is Wonderful; his covenant is all his salvation and desire. It is wonderful to the saints to think how there is something new in the name of Jesus every time the acts of faith are renewed! Hence after long tribulation, and doubts, and fears, wherein, like Noah's dove, they found no rest for their foot, they always return to the ark of his perfection and grace. They find that mountains in their way, seemingly impassable, sink before the Builder of God's spiritual temple. I am led into this train of thought, by considering the faithfulness of God's covenant, the designed subject of the present discourse—considering what a security to faith arises from it—what a variety of comfort; how happily it proves a resting place to the weary and tossed; and how secure it makes the eternal blessedness of the righteous—*I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness*—I will even do so. There is a particular mark on this declaration; this is a calling souls to come, and see, and consider, &c. The
meaning

meaning of the word *faithfulness* is easily comprehended. When spoken of him as the revealer of the word in general, it denotes the absolute veracity and truth thereof: When spoken of his promise in particular, it denotes the impossibility of its not being fulfilled; it is an invariable perfection of the Divine nature, and as such is attributed to Christ, who is called the *Faithful and True Witness*.—I shall, 1st, Shew you the import of God's saying, *I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness*. And, 2^{dly}, Make a practical use of it.

FIRST, It is imported in it, and must be observed, that faithfulness and truth is wrought into every offer and promise of the gospel. It is one of the very first principles of faith, without which none come to God, that every offer he makes, he makes in earnest; and every promise he makes he designs to fulfil, Heb. xi. 6.; and, as the nature of faith is to give credit to his word and offer, hence it is called a *believing his report*, Isa. liii. 1.; a judging him faithful, and dealing with him accordingly, Heb. xi. 11. So the devilish nature, and cursed guilt of unbelief lies in making him a liar, John v. 10.; and accordingly, when Christ introduces himself unto the soul, and declares his name, Isa. lxiii. 1. it is as one who speaks in righteousness. Hence, whenever faith is wrought in a soul, it goes to the promises of God for its food, saying, "*God is faithful, by whom I am called*, 1 Cor. i. 7. I will follow his call; no fear that following it I be disappointed; for it is the voice of God, and not of man—of the Faithful and True Witness; I will lay hold on his promise—I will rest my soul on it; for he is faithful who hath promised." To lead the soul to such

an exercise is God's gracious design, when he says, *I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness*.—"Every offer I make is in faithfulness; I offer thee myself in faithfulness; I give thee Christ in faithfulness; I promise thee pardon in faithfulness; I promise thee a final victory in faithfulness; I take thee to myself in faithfulness!" Believest thou this, O soul! Hast thou been determined to venture thy soul on it? Does it overweigh the testimony of Satan against God? Does it determine thee, when in future straits, after being brought to Christ, and looking sadly on the ruins of thy soul, to say, *I will arise and go to my Father*, &c. Luke xv. 18.

SECONDLY, This leads to observe, in the *next* place, as a principal branch of the meaning—*I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness*; i. e. I will never, on any account, leave thy soul for good and all; I will betroth thee unto me to do thee good—to guide thee through pathless ways—to bring thee to heaven, and to own and acknowledge thee there as my own. Now God's people, considering their own sinfulness and unworthiness, wonder, perhaps, how these things shall be; they fall into many snares, &c. afterwards—provoking God to leave them, as unworthy of his care and love. The Lord gives many signs of his displeasure against them for sin, and tries them by absence from them, &c.: Hence arises a great difficulty; the view of it before-hand discourages, perhaps; the actual feeling of it makes them cry, *Is his mercy clean gone?* As a ground for their faith to proceed on now, and in all dark times hereafter, he says, *I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness—And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear*

fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me, Jer. xxxii. 40. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, Heb. xiii. 5. I will visit with rods and chastisements: This is promised, and it is fit they should take place; but *loving-kindness* shall not be taken away; he loved you when undeserving—he knew thou wouldst deal very treacherously: *But he is of one mind, and who can turn him?*

THIRDLY, The Lord says, *I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness*; i. e. I will never suffer thee to depart from me totally; *My faithfulness shall be thy shield and buckler, Psal. xci. 4.* In our natural state we are Satan's slaves—the remains of a body of death gives him still much interest in us. The language of our unbelief is like that of the Israelites in the wilderness—*Let us return to Egypt:* But this sad byass shall never carry away the whole heart. Jesus shall keep that which is committed unto him—*Thou shalt call me Father, and shall not turn away from me, Jer. iii. 19.* When God takes his people to himself, it is in those very terms, *To keep them by his power, through faith unto salvation!* This abiding in him, is secured by God's eternal love. Christ prays for them, that their faith may not fail! His prayers are always successful, always seasonable—preventing even the danger: His Spirit likewise dwells in them, and lifts up a standard against the devouring adversary! But the spring of this, (*viz.* everlasting love) is the terms of the blessed covenant, *I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness.* Hence, as before, appears the glorious suitability of Divine grace, and of God's covenant, as made with a perfect view of the poverty, emptiness, and misery of the poor creature!

FOURTHLY,

FOURTHLY, *I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness*; i. e. I allow and authorise thee to hold by my faithfulness, as thy perfect and unalienable security with respect to this bargain between me and thee—*Put me in remembrance*, says the Lord, *and let us reason together*, Isa. xliii. 26. A Christian life must be maintained by intercourse with Christ, in the way of faith and prayer. Now, God gives his people wherewithal to come to his throne, even his word, as spoken in faithfulness: So the Spirit of prayer, teaching us for what, and how to pray, makes use of this word of faith—bringing it to remembrance; hence you see every where God's children pleading on it—keeping hold of the cord of love let down from heaven, Psal. lxxxix. 43.: And the Church acknowledges all the flowing out of Divine mercy to flow from this Source—*Great is thy faithfulness*, Lam. iii. 23. And when a soul, sunk under the dregs of indwelling sin, is raised again to life and comfort, it is just by coming to this tried word.

FIFTHLY, The Lord says, *I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness*, in regard that his taking his people to himself, is an act of fidelity and faithfulness to his promise, made concerning them before the world began. The Father gave them to Christ from eternity. Christ accepted the gift, dear as their redemption was to cost him! When he ordained them to salvation, he ordained them to it by Christ, in the way of believing, 2 Thef. ii. 13. Christ's word was, *Lo, I come to do thy will!*—As the Father promised to pour his Spirit on them, that they might say, *I am the Lord's*, Isa. xliv. 3.: So Christ takes them to himself; so faithfulness is glorified in the first dawning of grace in
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the heart. As the uniting to Jesus is just the eternal decree bringing forth its fruit—glorious scheme!—great grace! what may be expected from such beginnings?—The promise breaks through the darkness and death of our state! What then shall it not do!

THE Application of the present subject is fallen by.

Mr BUCHANAN preached several Sermons on Isaiah xliv. 5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's, &c.* Many of the sentiments contained in these, being similar to the Discourses on the present subject; it is thought proper to insert here part of the Application, it being equally suited to both subjects.

APPLICATION.

I NOW proceed to lay before you, the character of one truly in covenant with God. I shall endeavour to enter into the heart of a truly devout man, and trace him in these exercises that flow from the indwelling Spirit; confining myself chiefly to such things as naturally arise from the view of his state. For order's sake, consider him under these distinct views: *1st*, In his exercise with respect unto God. *2^{dly}*, In his exercise with respect to the covenant. *3^{dly}*, The exercise of his heart with respect unto sin; in each of these something distinguishing flowing from the state of personal relation to God. As to the

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FIRST, The man that has truly and successfully been engaged in personal covenanting, and self-dedication to God, his soul will be exercised in breathing after God. See how naturally, and strongly this is represented by the Psalmist—*As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God*, Psal. xlii. 1.; this is the most frequent exercise of that saint in the days of his rejoicing, and while under his hidings. The saint's view of Christ has something attractive—The man has chosen God for his God; hence wants all his comfort if God be absent. If an evil heart sets before him a cure for his disquietude; if the heart sways that way; does he find content? No—If he come to ordinances and misses God, can he be pleased? No—Will the smiles of the world satisfy him? No—If the Lord hides himself in anger, he laments after him—*O that I knew where I could find him*, Job xxiii. 3. I know he is just, and I dare not complain of him; but I do of myself: My folly makes my wounds to stink and corrupt! But, oh! where shall I find a cure but in my God? There is a peculiar language on such occasions, which God himself teaches the soul; humility and earnestness are the two characteristics of it—Then it will plead every argument: His name's sake—his pity and compassion—his promise through Christ: If not successful, does not run away; but sits down, and weeps over himself—*Lord, let me look again to thy holy temple*. If the Lord smiles upon his soul, he breathes after him still more—*Set me as a seal on thine heart, and as a signet on thine arm*. He longs to break the prison—has a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. O day of glory dawn! Jubilee come—shadows flee! All this mixed with reverence and adoration—He seeks

seeks a place, the lowest he can, from whence to send the suit. Here are thoughts I cannot clothe in words; for in another place they are expressed in sighs and groans! These denominate the Christian; these mark out the manner in which he has said to the Lord, *Thou art my Lord*. In the

SECOND place, He that has said, *I am the Lord's*, &c. Another part of his exercise is, To rejoice in the glory of God. This bespeaks an interest in him—this shews where the heart is set. See Phil. iii. 3. You will easily see this must flow from a spirit of adoption, and the new nature. Many are the ways this exerts itself—They rejoice in the discovery made of his glory in the gospel—are pleased to think, that, to eternal ages, *Mercy and truth shall shine thence*. They rejoice in the manifestations of his glory in his saints; hence love them for his sake. They rejoice if God is glorified, though they be depressed: How willingly will they lie down in the dust for this purpose! The thought of this reconciles them to the thought of suffering and affliction—What am I? lay my honour in the dust, I have nothing I can call my own. If God speaks terrible things to the world, they rejoice that all these reelings shall end in his glory; the very wrath of man shall praise him! Do not the saints in heaven rejoice thus? What is it they see? Whence flows their delight but hence? Is not this the temper of Heaven disclosing itself from the bud? On the other hand, they are grieved if the interest of religion suffer. Sin, (as hereafter) heart-sin is a dreadful thing, because contrary to God—*Against thee, thee only have I sinned*. Rivers run down from their eyes when wicked persons sin, &c. Thus do these exercises express their relation to God. In the

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THIRD place, Another part of the exercise of a Christian with respect to God, and mark of this relation to him, is, He is willing to trust his soul in the hands of God—*Into thine hand I commit my spirit*, Psal. xxxi. 5. The Apostle Paul admirably expresses this, when he exults, as it were, in the thoughts of his safety—*I know in whom I have believed*: Not like those who care not for their souls—let them take their fate; or make a pretence, because they cannot refuse it: No; it is another way. The Christian knows God, and will trust him—believes him faithful, able, merciful; therefore with a peculiar pleasure commits it, as a sacred pledge, into the hands of a friend, willing to take Christ's word of promise for its safety and security. Thus, faith works by love—*This is my rest, for I like it well*. Amidst all the accusations of conscience, &c. let him see but a word to rest on, and he will fix as on a rock. If even the Lord hides himself, will he think then of removing his trust? Nay—A hypocrite's pretended faith dies away with his pretended sensible feelings: Not so the Christian—*Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him!* To whom should I go? says he. If God seem not to take him up at first, he will leave his soul upon him—he would not let go the hold for a thousand worlds! If God shines, grace appears. His confidence is not in the flesh, then, but in Christ alone. Let an hypocrite pretend what he will, he shall never quit self-righteousness; he cannot be reconciled to God's way.

FOURTHLY, Ask thy heart, How dost thou behave toward God when he is seeming to despise and cast thee from him?—Hiding of God's face, you know, is designed for a trial. Hence Christians shine brighter after the cloud is over. I distinguish here between
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the motions of corruption, in this case fought against, and the dictates of the new nature, quite opposite to it. Much corruption, I own, is then shewed; but sparks of grace shine from under the ashes! If challenges are hereby revived, then the Christian will say, *Truth, Lord: If it seems to be in the way of anger—I will bear the indignation of the Lord, &c.* If a corrupt heart tempt, as Job's wife did, the answer will be like his—*Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* If prayer is shut out, there will be a challenging one's self—What have I done? Then there will be some comfort in having the mind brought to think well of God. Any thing contrary to this is most of all to be feared; in nothing will the true spirit of the child of God, perhaps, be more discovered than in this. Happy they that possess it! We may be assured there is one who acts toward them as a refiner. Man, thou mayest feel Christ's promise accomplished—*When thou goest through the fire, I will be with thee!* The Psalmist acknowledges this—*Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence*, Psal. xciv. 17. This is a presage of joyful days to come. These are a part of the exercises of true believers towards God, in consequence of their having said, *I am the Lord's*, and are marks of their state. Consider them now under another view,

SECONDLY, In their *exercise with respect to the covenant itself*. Here we find the Christian,

FIRST, Cordially approving of the whole plan, and looking upon it with admiration, as the full, and truly suitable relief of a sinner in such a case, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Human nature is averse to this way—is in love

with something they call God's covenant; but in reality nothing less. Hence, blessed they that are not offended in Christ. A natural man could always find in the covenant something useless, unsafe, intolerable: He cannot approve of it as the way in which he will draw near to God. Now, the exercise of him who has subscribed—*I am the Lord's*, is quite opposite to this—Provision is seen full and compleat—a glorious chain of promises of grace and glory, suited to the condition of him as an utterly dead soul. Here is an excellency indeed! tending to carry forward the work of holiness—to write the law of God in the heart, and eradicate corruption; all this is lovely indeed—gives glory to Christ—makes my salvation tend that way—a depth of wisdom and love; and makes Christ acceptable, yea, brings him to my very heart. In a word, He views the tenor, the application, the end of the covenant, not with an indifferent heart; his Spirit is cast into a mold for it—hence calls it, *The power and wisdom of God*. You will see I do not mean lip-labour by this, nor a distant admiration, founded, one knows not how; but a view of it with the same eye where-with the man has beheld himself poor, naked, &c.; God wronged, justice incensed, and the way to heaven barred up: Then, seeing the secrets of the covenant revealed, he cries, *How sweet are thy words to my taste*, Psal. cxix. 103.: Hence it is taken for his food ever after—Not a flaw found, no other security demanded; yea, the soul sees it impossible greater can be given. All this, certainly, arises from a discovery made by God himself to the soul; an evidence that he has been leading him by the hand, and will perfect what concerns him.

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, Another exercise of a true Christian, with respect to the covenant, is, A deliberate surrender of himself to God in this way. To understand what this is, we need only look back on the foregoing part of the subject; and that we may know how essential to, and descriptive of the character of a Christian this is, see Jer. iii. 22. *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* Hear true penitents saying, *Come and let us join ourselves unto the Lord; in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten,* Jer. l. 5. Their approbation of the covenant is not merely a speculative thing—their hearts are brought to correspond with the design of it. Examine, then, if ever you have been taught that language in secret: Have you seen with joy God in Christ reconcilable; calling upon you; offering to save you—to perfect all in his own way; making a covenant, whereinto you are invited. Have you weighed this matter, and seriously given up yourselves to him accordingly, saying, “I will be no longer my own, but thine—my soul thine; to thy righteousness, for salvation, I submit myself; to the promised influences of thy Spirit, for sanctification; to thy service, and do thou free my soul for that purpose; to be for thee and for thy glory—thine in life, at death, and for ever.” All this is the language of the soul saying amen to the covenant. It is just the heart echoing back, as it were, the promise which it has taken at God’s hand. This is not only done at first, when the man is brought to Christ, but afterwards it is repeated; it is his delight to do it—happy when his heart is opened to go along with him in the exercise—the Spirit blowing, to cause the spices flow out. This exercise, in the time of it, is commonly

ly attended with peculiar comfort, less or more evidence of God's love; reflections upon it also cheers the soul, and shews the person's interest made sure, Psal. xvi. 2. In the

THIRD place, Another exercise of the true Christian, with respect to the covenant, is, That here he perceives a God in Christ, and receives every blessing, in faith, from him. This is one of the most essential differences between the Christian and the hypocrite. The one sees God by faith, the other not—the believer perceives him as in Christ. This discovery is one of the noblest exercises of faith. Let a carnal mind be ever so much enlightened by learning—be able to talk much about religion, &c. yet it never shall attain this. It is he only who has a spiritual discerning whose eyes are opened; others may amuse themselves on the field, he digs and finds the hid treasure. Many of your consciences, if attentive, will just now bear witness to this. Now Christians have the promises, &c. endeared to them on this very account; God in Christ is there seen in all the glory of his mercy and justice united—his eternal wisdom and power displayed—his voice to sinners heard, when they hear (inwardly) the joyful sound—this the voice of God, and not of man! Hence they venture their souls upon it; receive the assurance of all grace with satisfaction inexpressible; a pardon that allays all the troubles of their souls; grace to help them in time of need; strength to help forward in their Christian warfare. Their intercourse with heaven is therefore kept up this way. In the

FOURTH place, He that is truly in covenant with God will be found adhering to, and resting himself on it in times of the greatest trouble and difficulty. It will

will be to him matter of joy in times of outward trouble; the promises of it will be his sanctuary—his pleasant food in times of sorrow. Doubts and fears may cause him suspect his interest; but he will not, having once cast anchor here, seek relief any where else. Hence we find God's people pleading it—have regard to thy covenant; wrapping themselves under this cover, and possessing their souls in patience. If these are thy exercises, then it will, and shall be well with thee for ever.—We proposed, in the

THIRD place, on this head, To lay before you, for trial, some account of a true Christian's *exercise concerning the sin and corruption of his nature*. Personal covenanting with God supposes the man saying, *What have I to do with idols, &c.* There is a declared war against God's enemies by the child of God—*other lords have had dominion over us, but now will we only make mention of thy name*. You may see, therefore, whether you have been sincere in this matter, by communing with your hearts on these particulars:

FIRST, He who has, in truth and righteousness, laid hold on God's covenant, is troubled at his sins, because God is wronged by them—*Against thee, thee only have I sinned, &c.* The sorrows of hypocrites are from fear of wrath, his from filial love—this shows a truly child-like spirit. When one who has made mention of the name of God reflects on himself, sees how his heart has departed—vows been broken—God's authority insulted and despised by *him*, a sworn servant of the Most High, then he reflects on himself, as guilty of the grossest sacrilege—it was robbing God of his due; it was setting idols in his throne; it was calling him a hard master! These views of sin fill him with remorse:

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Hence he loaths himself as the worst of creatures; sin being so directly contrary to the holiness of God, such an abuse of his mercy, and the thing that his soul hates: Hence says the Christian concerning it, What have I done! God hears his people bemoaning themselves thus on that account: "Fool that I was, and flow of heart; how just if God should now cast me out—should now separate me from his love for ever." If there is a sense, or hope of pardon, this takes away fears, but quickens his sorrow, and makes his tears flow the faster. This is sorrowing after a godly sort. But, in the

SECOND place, In consequence of this, if thou art truly devoted to the Lord, thou wilt look upon sin as the defilement of thy soul, and loath thyself on the account of it—*I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* A faith's view of God presents an object so pure, as shows the evil of sin most distinctly. The new nature is so formed as to perceive an evil in sin; tracing it in its various actings in the heart, makes a Christian mean in his own eyes—the chief of sinners; his duties, his own righteousness, which others are so fond of, disappear—a covering too narrow: Hence in me dwells no good thing. True Christians feel, what others speak, that the heart is desperately wicked, and cannot therefore be reconciled to it on any account—quite contrary to the character of him who says, *God, I thank thee, &c.* In the

THIRD place, Hence follows in every saint an earnest desire after, and rejoicing in the thoughts of deliverance from it here and hereafter—*Who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? &c.* They say, with Job, *I would not live alway*, because this is a state where sin abounds; and what recommends heaven

ven to Christians, but the thoughts of final deliverance from it?—hence they desire to depart. While other marks disappear, this will sometimes stay behind. The poor soul, perhaps, wrestles with little felt success—Well, there is an end, and expectation shall not be cut off: Death shall be welcome, because sin shall then be taken away; no more vanity, says the saint, or wandering in devotion; no more unbelief—the heart will never then refuse to ascend towards God. Satan shall not have access to me; then I shall be all glorious within—a spirit made perfect! I long to see this—what a load off me! This mixes some joy with the tears of God's people. Again, the thoughts of any partial deliverance from it here, is matter of rejoicing to them: Hence, they take it well if God melt them. They rejoice, when they find a promise to this purpose, as those who find great spoil—they plead it earnestly; if successful, sing in triumph, &c. All this flows certainly from the renewed nature—its most genuine acting.

FOURTHLY, and *lastly*, If you have said, *I am the Lord's*, &c. then you will also be engaged in wrestling against, and mortifying of sin, in the strength of grace. Every Christian is listed under Christ's standard—he fights before he overcomes. If strangers to mortification, alas! we are strangers to Christianity; but if we, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live—"I am crucified with Christ." He brings sin, as the disease of his soul, to the Physician; prays against it, watches, makes use of the sword of the Spirit, even the word of God, especially against the bosom lust. They cannot be called Christians who are strangers to this; otherwise, there were a new way to heaven. As for you who thus fight the good

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fight of faith, fear not ; for you shall be victorious, and more than conquerors through your Lord.

AND now, to *conclude* the subject, suffer the word of *Exhortation* in a few words. You may remember, that the design of all our discourses on this point was, to direct and encourage you in the way to life eternal—God forbid it should have been in vain ! If some souls continue careless about these matters, over them let me lament ; if others feel their exercise more distinct, and their hearts more encouraged, over them I rejoice. Now,

1st, Let me call on all who are strangers to God, and to the covenant of promise, now, at last, to draw nigh, and subscribe with their hearts and hand to God. I am speaking to the greatest part of the congregation—Why will ye die, why will you sleep away your souls?—why take pains to smooth the way to hell, by shutting your eyes?—why draw down double vengeance on your heads, by despising the gospel!—Think you that men go to heaven by peradventure? or is it not worth your thought!—Shall our preaching be in vain?—shall Christ have died in vain ; and his gospel be of no effect as to you ! Let me exhort you in the bowels of the Lord Jesus, Bethink yourselves ; awake, or be for ever fallen—the gate of heaven is now opened, but perhaps will be soon shut for ever ! —Here, perhaps, it may be *objected*, I doubt if the Lord will give me the assistance of his grace, to set and keep me in the right way—I know I cannot of myself ; my efforts, if not seconded, yea if not drawn out by his right hand, will be in vain—I shall but struggle with my chains, without breaking them. Without some security, then, from God for that assistance,
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how can I venture. Time does not allow me to answer this objection as it deserves. At present, only consider, (1.) Why dost thou set about any duty whatever—how art thou able to perform it? If the objection holds good here, it must do so in every other case, which is absurd. (2.) The Lord Christ, as a King, enjoins thee to give obedience to his commands. Come and submit thyself to him; put all in his hands—say, “The hand is withered, but in submission to thee, and in hopes of thy grace being made sufficient for me, I will essay to give my heart and my hand to the Lord—*fir naming myself by the name of Israel.*” Art thou brought this length—he is already leading thee; be not afraid, he will perfect his own work. His promise of assistance here is as free as the rest; if thou canst take it in faith thou hast it. O haste forward, and come, that your souls may live!—“Draw me, O Jesus, and I will run; behold I stretch my hand, to be led by thee; be it to me according to thy word!” In the

2d place, Let me exhort you who can with pleasure reflect on these solemn transactions betwixt God and your souls, often to renew them. These bonds, my dear Brethren, are light—to remember them is delightful—to act them, and feel them over again tied, is joy unspeakable! the language is such as Christ delights to hear—it has in it something divine, and smelling strong of heaven. It is the way to break the power of your sins—to revive or strengthen your spirits when drooping—it is the way to stir up in you the exercise of every grace, by bringing you near the great fountain of it—it is the way to enlarge your discoveries

discoveries of the glory that shall be hereafter revealed, and to prepare you for it here. While Christ says to you, *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away; turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether*, Song ii. 17.—while he calls, do you answer—while he yet speaketh, do you hear; and then shalt thou have it to say, with unspeakable joy, “Did not my heart burn with—
“in me while he talked with me by the way, and
“while he opened to me the scriptures!” *Amen.*

S E R M O N XXXIX.

JOHN XX. 27, 28.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my bands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

WE are met together this day, my Brethren, to commemorate an event worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance—noted in the records of heaven—long foretold—exactly fulfilled; an event that was the admiration of angels—is still matter of inquiry to them—still raises the loudest songs in that immortal society. It is remembered particularly by glorified saints, as they have a peculiar interest in it. How like is it to Heaven to be thus employed! What a joyful prelude to entering there! What a joyful thing to say AMEN to the whole heavenly host! I hope some of us have a part in *Christ's death* also. Raise your hearts; tune your harps to the songs of Zion. Rejoice, O Daughter of Zion, thy King cometh! He suffers no more, but commands these, his sufferings, to be remembered. Shall we draw a veil over his cross?—shall we be ashamed to lift ourselves here! The very sons of darkness are not ashamed of their master! Let us then, to the joy of angels—the confusion of devils, and the shame of wicked men, avow our Master. So far is he from desiring the cursed death to be forgotten, that he calls his people to
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his Table, saying, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side*—these wounds for thee!—bled balm for thy perishing soul! Will not this convince thee of my love? *Be not faithless, but believing.* Let me not find a cold heart, a lukewarm spirit. I hope your answer shall be, *My Lord, and my God.* The occasion of the words is obvious. Christ had come to his disciples on the evening of his resurrection, and commanded peace unto them. Thomas was then absent, and declared his distrust of the fact in strong terms. Christ kept him a while in the dark: At last he comes; (O his grace!) it would seem chiefly for his sake; he knows our unbelief afar off—he shews himself—he speaks the word. O what a change followed upon it! How soon can Christ do this! Despair not, poor soul—Lift up thy heart to God, that he may, in the same manner, appear to us by his Spirit. Let your souls be breathing in ardent desire. When the mouth is open, he fills it.—In treating this subject, I shall endeavour, through Divine assistance,

I. To accommodate this condescending invitation, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side*, to our designed exercise; and direct you to such an attentive and believing view of Christ crucified, as is suitable to it.

II. To shew how such a view of him tends to comfort the soul, and silence unbelief in its various exercises in saints and sinners—*Be not faithless, but believing.*

III. To teach you to imitate this glorious confession of the convinced disciple, and utter, like him, this answer of the heart—*My Lord and my God.*

IV. To make some improvement of the whole.

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FIRST, then, *I am to endeavour to accommodate this condescending invitation—Reach hither thy hand, &c.* Something similar to this, is the very design of the ordinance. Christ clothed with garments of salvation is a glorious sight—the very food of souls. He is not now seen with the bodily eyes; this is not necessary: It was not even this sight that did good to the Apostles. It is by faith he is to be viewed: If you have this, then Christ is here.

FIRST, Look through these symbols and behold Christ voluntarily submitting himself to the death, even the death of the cross. Christ is willing to have his wounds searched into—here much of his glory is seen! He was to have victory, success, and triumph; but first must suffer! This is a sight that might melt our hearts, considering the reason of it: But yet Christ seen thus, is glorious in his apparel! We are not able, indeed, to fathom the depth; but, O glorious things are to be found in it! Amazing love, stronger than death! Behold Jesus viewing before-hand what he was to suffer! Behold him in an agony!—amazed, sorrowful, and very heavy, standing alone when the flaming sword was drawn—his holy soul under a pressure unspeakable—God forsaking him!—the united powers of darkness bending all their rage against the Second Adam—none to alleviate his exceeding sorrow! These fled whom he had asked if they would go away! Nor had the storm yet spent its rage—he must be hurried from prison to judgment; and his sovereignty insulted by sinful worms! At last a cross awaits him!—exquisite torment must attend his passage from life. Death seizes him—found in fashion as a man, and in our stead! He bows his head under the weight of our guilt!—dismisses his Spirit when it was finished,

finished, and not sooner. *Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him!* What glory is to be seen here by the eye of faith! Jews and Gentiles accounted it foolishness—Let us say it is the Power, the Wisdom, and the Love of God. Turn aside, then, and view this great fight! But,

SECONDLY, View me, says Christ, as opening the healing fountain of blood, and reach hither the hand of faith, that virtue may proceed from me to thy soul. It is not a cold remembrance we are called unto—By these stripes we are healed. Christ beheld us in a dying case: He came in the promise to fallen Adam. “Poor man, how woful thy case! How deformed thy appearance! How art thou fallen! This present misery is nothing to what is to ensue. Yet look up—I *will restore what I took not away.*” This language is repeated to convinced sinners—Art thou stung with the poison of the old serpent? Is thy wound grievous? Here is the balm of Gilead—though a root out of a dry ground, yet it drops it; reach hither and receive it: Touch me, and healing virtue will proceed from me—the fountain is still running! Thinkest thou I would suffer without reason? Nay; I have a commission, and power hereby to save thee. I know thou feelest the smart of thy wounds—art afraid of the event; and darest thou come short of me—*Behold, my salvation is near!* I am willing to help thee forward. Canst thou venture thy diseased soul in my hands? Lay thy hand on the Scape Goat—Come, and I will make thee whole!

THIRDLY, Look on him who was pierced, as the same now that he was formerly—unchangeable in his designs of grace, and still speaking the same language to sinners as before. Thomas knew his late Master—
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how lovely and loving! But thought him now no more—"I was blessed when I heard his voice, and "saw his glory," says he.—"Blessed were I," says the Christian, "had I such discoveries of him as formerly—were he willing to save me as former sinners." "Why," says Christ, "I am the same—thy Master late so loved." Whoever comes to Christ, will find the sacrifice offered up without the gates of Jerusalem of equal efficacy now as ever; its virtue cannot be impaired! God remembers it as if yesterday made.—"Oh, "Christ exalted is not the same to me as Christ on "earth," says the soul, "Oh, if he were!—this instant I "would come, like the Leper; I would imitate the "woman of Canaan; I would imitate her who washed his feet with tears, &c.; but now he is gone; "now I know not if he has the same intention, or if "application, in faith, will be equally successful"—Say, soul, is not this thy language? "Behold me, then, " (says he), by these marks, the same as formerly."—"Am I far off when my word is near, and my promise laid as the channel of conveying grace; tho' "its spring is in heaven, the other end is on earth."—Oh, unbelief speaks hard things of Christ; says he is not now what he was before!—"See, says he, if I am "not: Does not my word, my sacrament speak it?" O get this view of Christ—O soul-comforting discovery!

FOURTHLY, We are here called to view Christ as a Triumphant Redeemer. These scars are the marks of his engagement, and now the trophies of his glorious and compleat victory. Thus he is the object of admiration—*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?*

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I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save, Isa. lxi. 63.—From the land of death, from the grave, leading captive whose captive he was. O question worthy of enquiry! Some glorious person he must be—greater than the sons of men! If we ask, in the language of the Prophet, Zech. xiii. 6. *What are these wounds in thine hands?*—“I received them when I stood in the wine press alone, &c. My heel was bruised; but I bruised the old serpent’s head; and now die no more.” We are called to remember him who died, as one now alive—as a conqueror—as one who is to come again; and this is especially meant here. Now, the glory of Christ is great in this—hailed by angels! But you, Christians, have special reason to join in the triumph; it was the Captain of your salvation—you were interested: A deadly wound was given to your enemies; Satan’s head, the old man of sin, was virtually bruised. It is thy work, by faith, to view this with application—Christ triumphed in thy nature and in thy cause; thy resurrection is thereby secured—*Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, Isa. xxvi. 19.* Hast thou enemies? Put them in his hands. Are they prevalent? appropriate the benefit of Christ’s victory—remember him as risen!

FIFTHLY, In the *last* place, When Christ says, *Reach hither thy hand, &c.* he calls thee to view him by faith, as sealing and confirming that covenant which is thy title to eternal life. Here is an evidence that he was dead, and is alive. By death he made his testament of force; by his life he proves that the blessings are all purchased—*This covenant is well ordered, and sure.* Here both appear; the blessings of it are thereby ascertained, so that no doubt remains
of

of them ; their conveyance to the seed is ascertained by Christ's positive grant—*Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world,* John xvii. 24.—Your warrant to lay hold on it is made sure here. Christ has left a blank for thy name, that thou mightest subscribe with thy hand to the Lord. Let this be especially considered. God calls his saints to him, on this occasion, who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. This sacrament, O man, is that by which thine is to be made! Of old, covenants were confirmed on both sides by a sacrifice. Wouldst thou have the bargain made, ratified—made solemn? It is by commemoration of this sacrifice, if thy heart is set on the matter? Then God allows this to be an authentic confirmation of it—O sweet encouragement for a communion table! O blessed frame for communicating! Hast thou not thy mouth filled with arguments to use at it?—Having endeavoured to accommodate this condescending invitation; I proceed, in the

SECOND Place, *To shew how such a view of Christ tends to confront and silence unbelief, in its various exercises in saints and sinners.* And here again, let us invoke the Almighty Physician to apply his own cure. Here was a desperate like case, and yet cured by it. Has it gone any lengths with you? I cannot now propose to chase this enemy through all its windings. That is the great part of the work of a Christian's life. But, in a few particulars,

FIRST, To take it in its blackest and most universal form. Unbelief in sinners blinds the mind, so that

it sees no beauty in Christ, why he should be desired. This, alas! is the epidemic disease. Sinners, you despise Christ in your heart. Some of you, perhaps, are coming to say, Hail Master, and yet crucify him! Are there not many who wonder why he should be admired, prefer the enjoyment of their lusts; and hear his voice as unconcerned as if they were stocks or stones? They have found some plausible delay to every call—warded off every invitation! Christ is not worth having, according to them. O! what shall I say to convince you? I would fain gather you to Christ—*Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing;* and see if you can refuse him! View him, O sinner, bearing the load of guilt not his own!—descending to a grave in bloody garments; or view him ascending from thence in glorious triumph! View him on his throne, *as a Lamb that was slain!* Listen to the loud hosannas of angels to this Prince and Flower of Paradise!—stooping low—raised high—claiming kindred with thee to engage thy heart! and confess that he is *fairer than the sons of men—Be not faithless, but believing.*

SECONDLY, Unbelief will speak hard things of Christ, as unwilling to save; and will dispute the person's right to lay hold on HIS promise, though a suitability is seen in it to his case. The freedom of Christ's grace is his great glory! Unbelief robs him of it; and hence suggests, There is a fountain, but it is sealed; a promise, but thou art barred from meddling with it. Christ stands aloof from thee, and will not touch so vile a degenerate creature; therefore thou must pine away, O sinner, hast thou such thoughts! Why?—Trace the marks in his hands and side. These thoughts wound

wound him afresh—are contrary to his great plan. Draw near, view attentively—let actions speak for him. Believe these at least; and *be not faithless, but believing.*

THIRDLY, Unbelief suggests a difficulty from the prevailing power of sin, and urges that it is needless to apply to Christ; because there are peculiar kinds of malignity in the disease—something hopeless like about the person's case; and therefore says, as the Ruler's servant—*Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master*, Luke viii. 49. Once thou mightest have done so, but now the nick of time is past. The man, groaning under a sense of guilt, has been crying and praying; starting now and then from his lethargy—casting a wishful look to Christ. Now, says Unbelief, it appears that the case is desperate—every mean has failed; or, thou art got into a wrong tract, and cannot get out—thou art twice dead: Trouble not the master! Is not this, Christian, often the language of thy heart? And is there balm for this? Yes! See Christ here curing an obstinate unbelief that resisted every evidence. Is not a risen Christ the same as before?—Remember dead Lazarus, four days in his grave! and the Ruler's daughter, quoted above! If Christ be the same, thou hast his warrant to believe from both. Is he not near? Is any thing in thy case, such as will make him break his word? If a touch will not do, thrust thy hand deep into his side! leave the consequence to him—Tell him it is a case fit for such an one to undertake; and *be not faithless, but believing.*

FOURTHLY, There are cases wherein unbelief misrepresents Christ, as unsteadfast in his love—fickle and changeable like the man himself. Once he had his heart engaged to Christ; but, alas! he fell; mutual coldness,

coldness, to his apprehension, ensued—he remitted diligence. At first Christ would knock, and his bowels be moved; now he thinks he has given it over—former things he thinks are obliterated; otherwise why seek I in vain? why do enemies prevail? why is he as a wayfaring man?—Oh, my Lord hath forsaken me! O soul, what shalt thou now do? Thou canst not plead late acquaintance; for this is disowned. Take up your hope now, says Unbelief. Here is something to confront it: “O soul, I but hid myself for a moment.” Christ was risen eight days, and had not yet appeared to Thomas—See these well known marks of me now returned! I remember the kindness of thy youth, and love of thine espousals! Thoughtest thou that I was such an one as thyself? I bought thee too dear to forsake thee—See these hands! *Be not faithless*, then. Christ hides himself, because he will have us to seek him. In the

FIFTH and *last* place, on this head, (to comprehend several things together), Unbelief represents it as an unsafe thing to commit the soul to Christ on his word. This is just the great plot; and oh! that I could say any thing to detect it—Says Unbelief, this Christ is far off, and not to be come at; the way to him is hard, and I will not find it. Oh, a deceitful heart! I cannot believe; it is too much for me to expect—a wretch; this is no security. Now, I pose you on this: Does it flick here with you? Then, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.* O man! I am near, ready to catch thy first word; I will lead thy soul to the true exercise—I lead the blind in ways they know not, and in paths that they have not trod! Is salvation too much for

for my blood? or, is my word no security? Have I not kept it in returning from the grave? Doubtest thou my kindness? Look into my heart—search the wound afresh! Doubtest thou my power—behold me victorious; lay it here, in the cleft of the rock, I will keep it for thee carefully! *Be not faithless, but believing.* Is any heart now prepared to give the proper answer? or have you been preventing me? Are you essaying to say, *My Lord and my God?* Then, to help you forward, let me proceed to the

THIRD Thing proposed; namely, *To teach you to imitate this glorious confession of the convinced disciple, and to utter, like him, from the heart—My Lord and my God.* O sweet language! How much of Heaven in it! How grateful to Christ! Here I will, *1st*, shew the import of it, as here expressed—*2dly*, Direct and encourage you to the exercise.

FIRST, I say I will shew you what is imported in the exclamation. To this purpose observe,

FIRST, The soul of the formerly doubting man was struck and overwhelmed with so glorious a display of Christ as was now made—the Sun of righteousness now shone out! His doubts fled, like the shadows of the night. Christ speaks as never man did! Hence so glorious a change—so sudden a transition. When Christ comes the man is like one newly awaked from a deep sleep—“Where was I! How durst I doubt? “O Lord, why dost thou remember me? I have heard “of thy condescension; but is it such as this? Who “is this that comes so glorious! O for a voice to “praise, and a heart to sacrifice!”

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, Hereupon he makes a confession of Christ, in every part of his character; he acknowledges, he admires, he adores him—Thou art worthy, O Lord, thou art to be trusted. Let thy word be true, and my heart get the lie. Thou art exalted; thou hast power to save; thou workest wonders; thou hast a name above every name! I will proclaim it for ever—I cannot tell the rest. He adores his eternal Godhead; thou eternal fountain of light and life!—Thou incomprehensible Jehovah; thou hast ravished my heart; thou hast overcome: I yield, and adore, &c.

THIRDLY, Having now had the glorious discovery, and his heart brimful, he flies towards his Redeemer in the appropriating act of faith. When Christ is revealed, that promise is fulfilled—*Thou shalt call me Father.* The man cannot stay from Christ—sees a suitableness in him; Christ giving himself, in the word and sacrament—*I consent, be thou mine according to thy word.* It is wonderful he could say so after what is past: But it is the effect of Christ discovering himself; this is true faith—this shews it possible for doubting souls to attain to that exercise. I therefore proceed, in the

SECOND Place, To direct and encourage you to this exercise. And,

FIRST, Go up to the Lord's Table and express these sentiments there: Pour out your hearts to Christ—lay hold upon him. Our consent to the covenant is proper to be expressed in such an ordinance. Christ, in redeeming love, is here manifested; the sacrifice is commemorated; God speaks by sensible signs; Christ lays before thee his covenant—puts an instrument on
it

it in thy hand. Say, "Thou hast ravished my heart—
 "thou fairest of heaven—thou very Christ! Behold, I
 "come to thee; I call all that is within me to bear wit-
 "ness; my soul approves of thee—receives thee; to
 "make it sure, I want the work to be thine; after
 "thee, as taught, and in thy strength I pronounce it;
 "I know thee willing to help me; I trust to thy di-
 "rection, that I may not go wrong; thou shalt save—
 "thou shalt glorify me!"—*Who is this that engages his
 heart to me?* will the Lord say—I have surely heard
*Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised
 me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to
 the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou
 art the Lord my God,* Jer. xxxi. 18.

SECONDLY, Know, that if thy heart is willing, the
 Lord hath taken away every other difficulty out of
 thy way. Perhaps thou mayest say, "I cannot speak
 "it; my heart is hard and dead; I will mar the mat-
 "ter, and plunge myself into inextricable difficulties."
 Be not afraid man—Canst thou lisp out this language?
 Does thy heart give thee to it? Christ will understand
 thee, and teach thee in time to speak plain. Sometimes
 what the man calls no more than an essay to believe,
 is truly faith, and is understood so; no merit is ex-
 pected; he knows thou hast none to bring: All is
 provided for thee—even the fulness of Christ. O! what
 objections have you? If there are any more, let them
 be answered by Christ's own word—*Him that cometh
 unto me, I will in no wise cast out!*

THIRDLY, This is the very exercise that Christ wants
 to see and hear; and therefore has uttered his part of
 it to thee already. He came to manifest himself to his
 disciple, and draw this from him. When Christ fore-
 saw the triumphs of his grace, in bringing sinners to

this exercise, (Luke x. 12.) he rejoiced in Spirit—Christ rejoicing! It must be no common thing indeed! See that remarkable passage also, *I have surely heard Israel bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20.; his part of the bargain is made—I will betroth thee unto me for ever! Hearest thou, O doubting soul! To thee Christ speaks it—Who is saying, amen? Now, in the*

FOURTH and last place, For improvement I just name these reflections:

1st, Let us admire Christ's condescension to his doubting servant: How like is it to himself!—Every thing about thee is glorious, O Jesus!

2^{dly}, Let us see that Christians, however great their present doubts may be, may yet hope that in due time the cloud shall be removed. Think on this ye that have known better days formerly than at present.

3^{dly}, See what value Christ puts upon faith, and how much he looks for it. Many instances of this are recorded in his word: This glorifies God, and strengthens every other grace.

4^{thly}, When

4thly, When Christ comes to look into our hearts this day, let not an unbelieving soul be found within these walls—Let assured Christians say, *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 38, 39. Let these who can go no further, at least say, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief*. Open the everlasting doors of your hearts, that the King of glory may come in, and sup with you and you with him.

S E R M O N X L.

JONAH ii. 4.

*Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight ; yet I will look
again toward thy holy temple.*

THE exercises of holy men, recorded in scripture, have, in all ages, afforded special encouragement and direction to God's people. He sees it necessary that they should meet with difficulties in their way ; but, because he loves them, he will not leave them comfortless. Hence so rich a variety of examples and encouragements in his word ; these are often effectual when other means fail. Often there is something in them so striking, so applicable, that the Christian imagines he sees a picture of himself. And, as we are sure that the work is God's, there is no danger in trusting to encouragements given by him, and authorised by his Spirit. The words read describe the case and exercise of a good man, in circumstances of distress the greatest, and to appearance the most hopeless—aggravated by a sense of guilt, the justice of God's procedure, and the immediate influence of his power in bringing it about. Yet here is a glorious, and ever-memorable instance of faith ! The more memorable, because there was little sensible ground of encouragement. To strangers this would seem, as it really is, a mystery. If we, my Brethren, are suitably exercised, probably we may find something in it more or less useful to us on this occasion. What I have to say on it chiefly

chiefly respects Christians: But may also serve for direction to all who have any concern about their souls. In treating this subject, I propose, through Divine assistance,

I. To point out some of the various cases in which Christians themselves, like the Prophet here, may be apt to say *they are cast out of God's sight*.

II. To shew what is imported in the exercise practised here by the Prophet, and proposed for their imitation in these cases—*I will look again toward thy holy temple*.

III. To shew what encouragement they have to this exercise; or whence it is that, under such discouragements, faith will nevertheless look again to God's holy temple.

IV. and *Lastly*, To conclude with some reflections on the whole.

FIRST, then, *I am to point out some of the various cases in which Christians themselves, like the Prophet here, may be apt to say they are cast out of God's sight*. Observe, in general, that the expression is metaphorical. Christians, in fact, are never so cast off, so as that God's love to them should fail, or that he should totally withdraw his Spirit; but this is said, either when in reality he ceases to give testimonies of his love, and seems to abandon them to their enemies, or when they, misinterpreting these, think he has forgot them—*Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me*, Isa. xlix. 14. This is often the case with God's people, as

FIRST, When the Holy Spirit gives the person a particular view of the plagues of his own heart—leading his views, perhaps, through a train of backslidings
he

he has been guilty of—shewing their aggravations, and saying, Thou art the man, &c. This was the case of the Prophet. Before a Christian has experience of the slipperiness and deceits of his heart, he will not believe it possible for him to go the lengths he does go. In prosperity, he thinks he shall never be moved; experience teaches him the contrary. Enemies that had hid their heads arise again—his soul, by degrees, is overcast with clouds, and he is led captive: But God will not suffer him always to go on frowardly—He prepares to return. He awakes the sleeping soul, sometimes after a long slumber, as in David's case; and speaks to him, as to Paul—*Why persecutest thou me?* This view of heart-plagues, being from the Spirit, is far different from the view that the world has of these things. Special light sets these objects in a distinct view—in a clear light; points the finger to the sore: Hence the man is amazed—*My heart is overwhelmed within me*, Psal. cxliii. 4. “Can God,” says he, “have dwelt here! Are these the spots of his children! Sure he will turn away his face from so loathsome a sight. If God were with me, why this evil?” Thus he reasons. Unbelief improves the advantage: Meantime his heart sinks like a stone; no reviving, or little, is perceived—“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thought Christ had begun to do it; but I am cast out of his sight!” But,

SECONDLY, A Christian is apt to say he is cast out of God's sight, when the Lord is found sensibly withdrawing his presence from him—seeming to deny him, at once, both comfort and assistance; while, in the meantime, ordinances have lost their wonted relish, and spiritual deadness prevails. This was the case with Job—*O that*

that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him, Job xxiii. 3, 8, 9. There are special times wherein the Lord manifests himself—draws aside the face of covering, and speaks to the soul: O what joy then! It makes the sanctuary like the gate of heaven—a communion table like Paradise—"It is good to be here," says the man. But he must come down from the mount: Christ sees that this food is not always proper. In sovereignty, or for chastisement, he hides his face; and hence grace withers in the soul, and things remaining are ready to die! He not only wants comfort, but strength also; he cannot seek God but coldly—Formerly wont to come from his prayers joyful; now he is sad, and has no heart to the duty for this reason. Now the soul wants something—is out of its element—remembers God, and is troubled: Sin, meantime, gathers strength; he can hardly drop a tear over his soul; his heart fails when he thinks on the promises formerly so sweet—"Ah, me! I am forgotten, as they that have been long dead," says he; "I am cast out of thy fight." But,

THIRDLY, A Christian is apt to say he is cast out of God's fight when he seems, perhaps, to be contending with him in any particular affliction, or cross providence. This has been the exercise of many of the Lord's people; and was the case of the Prophet here. This takes place especially, when they can read their sin in the punishment—when this bears some particular mark of wrath, as they think. Brethren, it is no easy matter to have the heart reconciled to affliction—Our
patience

patience is commonly all in words. We see what harsh conclusions even the Lord's people make this way; they are apt to think that God's mercy is gone; and dare hardly apply for relief—fearing that they are *cast out of God's sight*. But,

FOURTHLY, Sometimes a Christian's case may be such, that in any, or all of the above instances, unbelief gets a seeming foundation to go upon, and plead in opposition to the promise. Christians well know, that even when faith looks out for a dawning ray from the word and ordinances, unbelief will say, How can these things be? (this was probably the Prophet's case). If he tries the channel of the word, the ordinances, &c. unbelief then urges former disappointments, and present darkness; it suggests harsh thoughts of God, and aggravates the danger of the present case—"Thou hast shut out the promise by guilt; it is none of thine; and God declares against thee." See the woman of Canaan. Oh! this is almost the bitterness of death; this would extinguish the spark, if God interposed not: Especially when unbelief puts on the mask of regard to God, and fear of presumption; then he will say, *I am cast out of thy sight*. In the

FIFTH and *last* place, It is to be observed, on these occasions the Christian may have lost the view of his evidences of the Divine favour, and is well nigh forced to let go his confidence—is reduced to a peradventure; and it is almost by violence that he gets that length: Fears, meantime, prevail, and embitter every expedient he tries for his relief. The thought of being a stranger to Christ overwhelms his soul; he knows not how or where to find him; if he has been deluded before, he dreads it again; thence he is afraid that

that God will with-hold his grace, or refuse such prayers as he fears his may be: Then he fears, indeed, *that he is cast out of God's fight.* It is more than human power that upholds the Christian now, and enables him to *look to God's holy temple*; which leads me to speak, shortly, of the

SECOND Thing proposed; namely, *To shew what is imported in the exercise practised by the Prophet, and proposed to Christians, for their imitation in these cases.* The turn of the expression is adapted to the Old Testament—See 2 Chron. vi. throughout. God dwelt in the temple by visible manifestations of his glory; and, therefore, prayers were made to it as his throne. This was a type of God in Christ—now more clearly revealed, as the object of the Believer's faith. The exercise here described may include,

FIRST, The essayed adherence of faith to the promise; to these promises, I mean, that are suitable to his present case. The expression intimates a degree of faith far below that which rises high and casts out fear. There is great difference betwixt the Apostle Paul's persuasion, and the faith of him who cried, *I believe, Lord, help thou mine unbelief.* God opens the man's eyes, and lets him see that there is help laid up for him in Christ—that there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there! But many a bar appears in his way: Nevertheless it would stand him very hard to want Christ—Therefore, if he cannot get to it easily, he will wrestle. If God seems to say, *This is childrens bread:* He answers, *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the childrens table.* See Job's exercise, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!* Job xiii. 15. “ Lord, I am cast out of thy fight; ini-

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"quities testify against me; I am, as thou sayest, a
 "dog—yet out of hell! Thou mayest do what thou
 "wilt—justly: I claim nothing as my due; yet I must
 "look again, where I have looked before and been
 "lightened." This is truly wonderful! God appears
 casting out the sinner here, yet, in reality, is secretly
 upholding him! O the riches of his love! But,

SECONDLY, In this exercise there is also included,
 an humble waiting for the blessing. They are men-
 tioned as synonymous terms—*I will wait upon the
 Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and
 I will look for him*, Isa. viii. 17.; though he has not
 the boldness of the self-conceited Pharisee, yet he will
 stand afar off, crying, *God be merciful to me, a sinner*
 —"If help come not immediately, yet the Lord's
 "time is best." When God plunges his people into
 depths, he empties them of self; hence they are not,
 like proud beggars, taking amiss the first refusal.
 "Nay," says he, "I am punished less than I deserve—
 "If I miss it in one ordinance, let me go to another:
 "I may meet with rubs, as the Spouse did, but the
 "blessing is worth waiting for." Rejoice, my Bre-
 thren, in this opportunity now before you. As it is
 necessary not to enlarge, I shall proceed to what was
 proposed in the

THIRD Place; namely, *To shew what encourage-
 ment Christians have to this exercise; or whence it is,
 that, under so many difficulties, faith will neverthe-
 less look to God's holy temple.* As hinted before, it is
 God himself that leads the Christian to this, and
 teaches him to go, taking him by the arms, though he
 knows not that he healeth him. Now, as to the par-
 ticular encouragements given, I propose not to de-
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duce at large the grounds of faith, but only just hint at a few things adapted to this particular case. I observe, then,

FIRST, That, with a view to these circumstances into which his people might be placed, God has made a particular provision for them in the tenor of the gospel-promises: Remarkable to this purpose is Isa. l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God!* Here there is a call for trust in the Christian's particular case. To the same purpose—*For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer,* Isa. liv. 7, 8. Here a glimmering ray dawns on the soul! “Who knows but God designs to try my soul in these? Why is such comfort provided?—Here is bread, &c.; and, therefore, “I will arise.” Consider, Christian, whose voice this is. Wilt thou venture on God's word? It is by such faith he is glorified. Is it not God's great design to glorify himself? How—but by mercy to the most unworthy! Merit of yours is out of the question—*For my name sake,* saith the Lord, Isa. xlviii. 9. What else could make David pray for pardon of his iniquity?—*For it is great.* Study distinct views of the object of faith, and doubts will be silenced. God's mercy is another thing than perceived either by saints or sinners.

SECONDLY, There arises encouragement to the Christian in the above case, to *look again toward his holy temple*, from the example of the Lord's people formerly; and, perhaps, from the person's own experi-

ence. The Church said, as well as thou, *Is any sorrow like mine?* David complained of the enemies of his soul, as thou dost. See Heman's case, in Psalm lxxxviii. throughout. The Christian views them triumphant; and therefore he will *look toward God's holy temple*. See Psalm xxx. "These were friends of God, and this was their case, and this their exercise; therefore it shall be mine."—These are the footsteps the flock has trode, Song i. 8.: This he calls to mind, and therefore hopes. See David in this exercise, Psal. cxliii. 5, 6. *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.* Again, if he has had any experience, and has felt the shadow of death turned into the morning, he remembers the finger of God in this, and says, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance!*—*Though I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.* In the

THIRD Place, The man considers, in this case, that Christ has the words of eternal life, and he only; therefore he resolves to trust him—and if he perish he perishes. "I have heard a good report of him," says he; "he is the Friend of souls!—if he will, he can; if I stay here I perish." He, therefore, reasons like the men who would go to the Syrians. "Has he any where forbid me? Am I not in as great danger of dishonouring him by unbelief as by presumption? May-be he designs me as a monument of mercy; at any rate I must try."—Mind what he said of the unjust judge. In the

FOURTH

FOURTH and *last* place, God renewing something of the exercise of love to Christ in the man's heart—this will incline him strongly to put his soul in his hands. The man that loves Christ will trust him: "Oh, he is worthy to receive glory!" says the man; "if I perish, it shall not be in the act of dishonouring him by unbelief. O that I knew how I might come to his feat!—doing homage to his great love and mercy! Were I even to die, I would do it at the horns of the altar!" Where such sentiments take place, better things may be hoped—The light thus dawns, and shines more and more to the perfect day.

The *reflections* I designed were,

1st, That we may see how God brings glory to himself, and benefit to his people, by the darkest dispensations.

2^{dly}, What encouragement Christians have to imitate the Prophet's example.

3^{dly}, That there is great ground of fear to those that are altogether unacquainted with soul-exercise, Every one's reflection will, through Divine assistance, enlarge on these from what has been said.

S E R M O N X L I.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily ; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

THERE is nothing more evident than that iniquity abounds, and that the world lies in wickedness. Every one who hears the gospel, has heard that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and will by no means clear the guilty. Every one that has not put out the candle of the Lord, knows that there is a God who loveth righteousness ; and I believe there are few that have their consciences so scared, as to think it all one whether they serve God, or serve him not. I appeal to every one who can think at all on these things. God has not been wanting in threatenings ; and he threatens none in vain. We pretend to believe all this, and yet go on without fear or reflection, jovial and gay, indulging ourselves, perhaps, in excess of riot, giving smooth names to the greatest sins—calling drunkenness, good fellowship ; madness, innocent mirth ; profane swearing, polite conversation ; darkness light, and light darkness ! What is it that makes sinners so resolute in a course of wickedness ? That the gospel gives no encouragement is certain—that God has no where declared himself favourable to wickedness—that no argument can be drawn from his grace ; for this teacheth to *deny*
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all ungodliness, and worldly lusts. The wise man gives this account of it—*Because divine judgment follows slow, and overtakes late.* Sinners think God such as themselves—that he has forgotten sin, and that they may escape hereafter as well as now. I am afraid this may be the case with many—they go on in sin; content themselves with half religion; and do not examine—*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* The scope of the passage is, That, by reason of Divine forbearance, it is not easy to discern any difference between the righteous and the wicked in this life. Punishment of sin is deferred, great sinners live and die without any remarkable testimony of the Divine displeasure; *therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil!* In the words, Sin is called an *evil work*—They contain a supposition that sentence is passed, but the execution delayed; and the abuse that sinners make of this dispensation. In discoursing of these words, I propose,

I. To shew on what account sin is called an *evil work*, and how it appears to be so.

II. To give you some account of the long-suffering of God concerning it, in not executing the sentence he has passed against it speedily; and inquire into the reasons of this dispensation.

III. To represent the woful abuse that wicked men make of this long-suffering.

IV. To inquire what may be the reasons of this horrid abuse, what pretences men have for it; and shew the absurdity of such pretences.

V. and *Lastly*, To apply.

FIRST,

FIRST, then, *I am to shew on what account sin is called an evil work, and how it appears to be so.* None of us have deep enough impressions of this. Fools make a mock at it! Hypocrites weep for an hour; and Christians themselves see it not so vile as it is. Let us, then, try to hold up the picture of this abominable thing that God hates. In the

FIRST place, We may see on what grounds sin is called an *evil work*, if we consider the nature of it: It is a rebellion against God, a transgression of his law, and an opposition to his holy and righteous nature. Ignorance of God makes us think light of it—*Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*, Psal. li. 4. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the hear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*, Job xlii. 5, 6.—It is a disputing the authority of God; saying, *Who is the Lord that we should obey him?* It is throwing off subjection to him; it is a bold defiance of his justice, as if we dared him to do his worst, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death—Wicked men look on God's threatenings, as words of course. It is an insolent contempt of his power—it is rushing on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, to gratify a lust, or please a worm! The language of it is, *Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us.* Finally, It is the blackest ingratitude to his goodness—while we profane his name, we eat his bread; we turn his own benefits against him; we turn his own temple into a synagogue of Satan! Had God reason to say, *O do not this abominable thing that I hate?* And can you, O sinner, have the assurance to believe God to be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet
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rush on the thick bosses of his buckler? Do you tremble at the name of an atheist? Consider what thou art! We may form some faint idea of sin by our glimmering knowledge of God; but it is beyond the power of a finite being to see thoroughly the evil of it, as done against God. In the

SECOND place, Sin may be called *an evil work*, in respect of these consequences of it, which every one does, or may feel. Sin is a root of bitterness, and the blossom of it goes up as dust: What misery has it introduced into the world! what bitter anguish! what cruel revenge! Look abroad into the world, where sickness and distress abounds, and see its effects; look at death, armed with his dreadful sting; look within, to a hard heart—carnal affections! A soul, formed for the knowledge of God, thrust out from his presence, become the slave of Satan and lust!—the noblest work below the sun marred!—the Divine image defaced; and that of the devil imprinted! Look at a soul ready to fall into the bottomless pit—a soul lost! Who can say more? O man, how art thou fallen! And what is at the bottom of this?—Sin. Sin quenches and grieves the Spirit, and lays a load on Christians themselves. Oh, sinners, open your eyes, turn them upward, inward, downward, and cry, Unclean, unclean! In the

THIRD place, The evil of sin appears by the various ways in which God has testified his displeasure against it in scripture; his patience made it necessary he should do so. See our first parents turned out of Paradise—an unrighteous world overwhelmed with the deluge; after provocations made it necessary, that God should renew the testimonies of his displeasure, by raining hell out of Heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

morrah. See his conduct towards the Israelites. But why do I mention these? The greatest instance is reserved to the last! View the Lord Christ suffering and dying—bowing his head under the weight of sins, not his own; his soul sorrowful, amazed and heavy—in agony! Who was it that thus suffered? Why did he so suffer? An expiring world would not be such an evidence of the evil of sin!—not if our eyes saw the heavens and earth in a flame together! O sinner, come and see this sight, and know what an evil sin is. In the

FOURTH place, The evil of sin appears by that severe sentence which a just God has past against the workers of iniquity. The wages of sin is death; that is, the just demerit of it. God hath already pronounced, against every soul that doeth evil, tribulation and anguish—utter darkness, to denote want of comfort—the worm that dieth not! This destruction is declared to be eternal, and the sentence after death irreverfible. Consider who pronounces this—*For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment,* Job xxxiv. 11, 12. The great Judge distributes punishments impartially. Consider whether he will lay on man more than his iniquities deserve. See how exactly he proportions the punishment to the degree of offence—*That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes,* Luke xii. 47. The Pharisees, who had greatest opportunities; and the Jews, who heard him, he threatens with the greater damnation; it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for these. Take these examples of his justice, and

and judge whether any sentence of his can be too severe. Think of eternity; think of the wrath of God; and think what sin must be! O think not light of sin! *Let no man deceive you with vain words*, Ephes. v. 6. Men who observe the slowness of Divine punishment will be surprised at this: But justice in God is not like anger in us; every thing that provokes him, does not immediately put him out of patience; wisdom and goodness, as well as justice, determine the time and circumstances of punishment. We generally entertain false notions about this—thinking God altogether such an one as ourselves. This leads me to the

SECOND Thing proposed; namely, *To give you some account of the long-suffering of God towards sinners, in not executing speedily his sentence against them; together with the reasons of that dispensation.* We need not go far to prove this; every one of us are monuments of it. There is no obligation on God to spare us at all; yet he proceeds slowly! In works of mercy he is forward; but judgment is his strange work, Isa. xxviii. 21. *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?* Hos. xi. 8.: This is best perceived by examples: viz. That of the old world; Sodom and Gomorrah; the Canaanites dispossessed before Israel; and our Lord's address to the Jews—*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!* &c. All this is agreeable to, and represents the character God gives of himself, Psal. ciii. 8. and elsewhere. Thus, *sentence is not executed speedily.* This manifests the glorious perfections of God in the clearest manner,

and has something surprising in it, as being unlike our ways and thoughts; but answers these wise reasons.

FIRST, Hereby the mercy of God is manifested in giving sinners space for repentance. All the Divine attributes are exerted in a consistence with each other, as an evidence of Divine wisdom: This design is proved by 2 Pet. iii. 9,—15. compared with Rom. ii. 4. *Despiseſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering; not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance?* It is long ſince God might have proceeded againſt you—many have been cumberers of the ground, and yet let alone this year alſo; many have been let alone who ſhall never ſee another! The true uſe of Divine patience, O ſinner, is, that thou turn and live!—it leadeth and pointeth to thee: As an evidence of this, many have been brought to repentance during this reſpite, and many more condemned for abuſe of the mercy offered; beware of falling in the ſame manner: For know,

SECONDLY, If, through impenitency and hardneſs of heart, this end be not attained, another will; that is, the manifeſtation of his juſtice, and vindication of his righteouſneſs—He *endures with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath*, Rom. ix. 22. When God aſks the hearers of the goſpel—Had you not calls, promiſes, threatenings, time and ſpace? What can they answer? What will yourſelves answer? God is witneſs againſt you! Every mouth will be ſtopped. Imagine the ſentence were to be paſſed now, what can you object? It will be a quite different thing before the throne of God! Thus the damned ſhall remain

main monuments of justice. God will not lose the glory of his patience, though we lose the benefit of it. When the cup of a sinner's iniquity is full, it shall then be put in his hand.

THIRDLY and *lastly*, Another reason why God bears long with many sinners is, to answer many wise ends in providence, that are to be brought about by this dispensation: For instance, they are reserved as instruments of punishment to others—for trial to the faith of God's people—for the sake of the connections they stand in, or relations they bear to others, perhaps the Lord's own people. *Finally*, They are often reserved for a more remarkable destruction. In all these respects God acts in such a manner as becomes his infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness.

SERMON

S E R M O N XLII.

ECCLESIASTES viii. II.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

WHAT was said last Lord's day concludes one period of the text, which we shall *improve*, in some reflections, ere we proceed further.

FIRST, then, Let every one of us reflect how great has been the patience and long-suffering of God to us in particular. This is a great mercy, but little considered! Want of this reflection is a source of many evils—of mis-spent time—of a misimproved gospel; and of hardness of heart. To set this in a just light, let me call you to remember,

FIRST, How you have been dealing with God. May he not say—*Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities*, Isa. xliii. 24. Reflect what sin is—it challenges his Omnipresence, or does worse! The world lies in wickedness—affronts the Majesty of Heaven. These affronts are against the Highest, and from the lowest! Some of you, perhaps, are guilty of Heaven-daring acts of iniquity, and sin with an high hand; in opposition to light—in defiance to threatenings! Hypocrites mock—Christians have left their first love, and backslidden; yet, God calls you, sinner, to repentance—you, Christian, to turn to your first Husband!

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Have you not here, at once, a trial and an evidence of Divine long-suffering? But, consider,

SECONDLY, How does God deal with you? If you know yourselves, you must think that you deserve his severest indignation. Has he not requitted you good for evil?—you now hear the joyful sound! Why are you not lifting up your eyes in torments?—you have given a refusal to the calls of his grace! Why were you not taken at your word? Because *he is long-suffering*! Consider, he is under no necessity of sparing us; he is not benefited by us; he could out of the stones raise up children to himself. Why does not wrath fall on the glutton or drunkard, while the meat and drink are in their mouths? Why is not the man that swears or lies, rivetted to the ground as a monument of the Divine indignation; and the scoffer at religion swallowed up in a moment? Consider also, that he spares us while he has us in his power! If a man meets his adversary, will he let him away? We are ever within God's reach; and soon could he ease himself of his adversaries. From him no darkness can hide us; should we dig into hell, thence could his hand bring us up. Consider also, finner, that this long-suffering takes place while thou art challenging the Most High to do his worst! These considerations, on both sides, give such a view of the Divine long-suffering, that we may justly cry out, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*! They may open our eyes to see what a God we have to do with, and awaken us to consider that some great end and purpose is designed by it.

SECONDLY, Another improvement we should make of the Divine long-suffering is, To propose it

as a pattern for our imitation in our conduct towards all men. I the rather mention this, because our Lord inculcates it so frequently upon his disciples—*Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee*, Mat. xviii. 33. Many are so foolish as to think they may be Christians without the temper of Christ. God has formed us for a social state. We here meet with many trials for the exercise of our patience. The gospel contains many maxims for the direction of our conduct, which it is surprising Christians should satisfy themselves about so easily. The nature of man is prone to wrath; and therefore Christ takes so much pains to guard against it. Consider, Can you pretend to be Christians without being like Christ? And now let me recommend it to you, as a general rule for you, to reflect with yourselves—How would Christ have acted in such circumstances? Apply this to the particular case before us, viz. Long-suffering towards our fellow-men.

THIRDLY, The last use I propose of what has been said is, To call upon you to make the proper use of the Divine long-suffering, by turning speedily to the Lord, while the sentence against your evil works is suspended; this is the use God himself calls you to make of it. In what terms shall I put home this call to you, my Brethren? There is reason to think that many need it; no doubt, many of you have already heard it. Once more the voice of Heaven to you is, Turn from your evil ways before the decree bring forth—before the few remaining sands in your glass be run. Do you know that God waits; that the old serpent watches to see if the prey shall be taken from his mouth? Is sin a light matter, or the wages of it worth

worth your pursuit? Do you believe that God is—that he is in earnest? Do you know that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Can you satisfy your consciences; or are they laid asleep? Have you any interest more worth minding? Alas! my Friends, you are cheated by the enemy of souls—You that are loaded at once with sins and years; you that have almost put out the candle of the Lord; you that are just entering into the snare of the devil, turn ye, turn ye—fly to the city of refuge. To persuade you to this, consider,

FIRST, That the sentence is already passed. God has made intimation of it to you. The original sentence stands unrepealed: It is often repeated—*He that believeth not is condemned already!* We know the rule by which we are to be judged. Divine justice must be glorified. Never imagine that God is altogether such an one as yourselves.

SECONDLY, Consider that nothing is more provoking to a holy God, than the abuse of his patience. Come, and reason with yourselves: Think not that God is an indifferent spectator of your conduct—he counts every season. See Luke xiii. 7. Days and years are marked by him when little noticed by us, and are all to be brought in judgment against you.

THIRDLY, Consider that the Patience of God will have an end. Though *sentence is not speedily executed*, this is only a reprieve. Divine patience is determined by wisdom and justice. Many examples to this purpose are recorded in scripture—the Jews in the wilderness; Jerusalem laid in ashes; our Lord's parable of the man, who was deservedly called a fool in holy writ. If it end at all, what security have you that it may not be this night? Let us deal impartial-

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ly with our consciences here, and not shut our eyes on the light: Say, is it safe to risk the event! Are you not self-condemned if you do so? Is there any reason against turning to God now, that will not be equally strong hereafter?

FOURTHLY, Consider that to dally with, and abuse God's patient long-suffering, will make your judgment more speedy, certain, and intolerable—*If that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants, and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken: The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not ware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers*, Luke xii. 45, 46.: And the heavier will judgment be; justice requires it should be so; the delay will be compensated with severity! Little do you think, that you now are laying up a sad treasure, and are vessels of wrath, fitting for destruction. Now, recollect the design and tendency of these arguments, to engage you not to abuse Divine patience, and to answer this design, by turning to God. The gospel becomes often the *favour of death unto death*. Divine patience is often abused to the worst of purposes. This is represented in the Text, and leads me to the third general head; namely,

THIRDLY, *To represent the horrid abuse that wicked men make of the Divine long-suffering—Therefore their hearts are fully set in them to do evil.* We have seen, and I hope shall further see, that this is not the proper use of Divine patience: But, in fact and sad experience, sinners are found deceiving themselves, and presuming, that because God punishes slowly,

ly, his threatenings against them will never be executed. This is the conduct we find the Apostle Peter complaining of in his days—*Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*, 2 Pet. iii. 4. *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord*, Isa. xxvi. 10. Thus it was in the days of Noah, and thus it shall be at the end of the world, Mat. xxiv. 38. The spirit of wickedness is much the same in all ages. The expression in our text denotes a great pitch of wickedness; yet has its several degrees, and may imply,

FIRST, That men turn familiar with sin, and become presumptuous in it. This is not commonly the work of a day; impressions of a religious education, or a dread of God, are not soon erased; but custom makes it become familiar. God hides himself and is wroth, and they go on in the ways of their own heart; the opposition from within lessens; what at first startled, and made them say with Hazael, *Am I a dog to do this?* passes without a reflection: Hence they venture on known sin; and sometimes endeavour to persuade themselves, that light is darkness, and darkness light; all this they do *because sentence is not executed!* Does not experience prove this? Cannot your consciences, O sinners, testify that iniquity has thus become familiar to you?—that you have forgotten that God was a spectator—that at first you took pains to guild the pill, and find reasons to justify yourselves; but at last swallowed it without a check? Let your consciences speak and say if your picture is not drawn here.

SECONDLY, Another effect of the misimproved patience of God, and which follows the former, and is implied in the text, is, That the consciences of sinners become hardened and seared—insensible to the threatenings of the Divine law. While God suspends execution, he does not leave himself without a witness; he deals with us as with creatures put upon trial. The effect it has upon wicked hearts, is like that it had on the wicked servant, who said, *My Lord delayeth his coming.* And not only sin, but the threatening becomes familiar! Conscience may now speak, but is heard no more—the impresson is so faint that it is effaced by any thing else that strikes the mind; at least the heart turns quite hard, and the Spirit withdraws—sermons are slept over, the Spirit of God rarely knocks, and the strong man keeps the house without alarm! Thus *the heart is fully set to do evil*; all its bonds are broke asunder: All this takes place *because sentence is not executed*—For the gospel is either the favour of life, or of death; hence so few old sinners are converted.

THIRDLY, When God delays the execution of the sentence, sinners lay aside all thoughts of an hereafter, 2 Pet. iii. 4. Not that they doubt the reality of an invisible state; but someway look on it as a thing they are not concerned in—the eyes of their mind being shut, nothing but what is present and sensible strikes them. Hence the estimate they make of every thing is wrong—a momentary pleasure is preferred to eternal welfare; a treasure in heaven is as little valued as the dust they tread on; the thought of appearing at God's judgment-seat does not alarm! Hence they say, *Let us eat and drink, &c.* Thus is the heart hardened, and *fully set to do evil*! This is an high pitch
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of wickedness, but not uncommon. Ask your hearts how they bear the intimations of a future state, and what influence they have on you.

FOURTHLY, The last and highest pitch of wickedness represented in the text is, When sinners so far throw off all regard to God, or concern for the welfare of their souls, as to embark themselves, professedly, in the service of Satan, and endeavour to laugh religion out of the world. This is the finishing stroke to a wicked character, and not arrived at soon; but follows the rest naturally—*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful*, Psal. i. 1. Some more openly, and others more privately engage in this; then *their hearts are fully set in them to do evil*, and all bonds are broken! This is manifested differently, sometimes in avowed reproaches against religion, and sometimes in a sly enmity against the power of godliness—in ridicule on devotion, or on the essential doctrines of Christianity! This is an open war against Heaven. I hope few, if any, of this character are amongst you: But beware of falling into the way that leads to it. I have thus explained and represented, in different lights, the characters represented in the text, to give every one the better access to try himself—to let you see the blackness of this character, and to represent the danger of abusing the Divine patience. This will further appear, by proceeding to the

FOURTH Thing proposed; namely, *To inquire what may be the reasons of this horrid abuse, which men make of the divine patience and long-suffering; what pretence they have for it, and to shew the absurdity*

dity of such pretences. All the hopes of impenitent finners are refuges of lies. The end of the gospel is to beat them off from these. I do not mean that people always reason themselves deliberately into the degree of wickedness mentioned above. Men are commonly governed by loose unformed sentiments, rather than consideration—they take things without examination: They imagine, *1st*, That sin must not be in itself so evil a thing: Or, *2^{dly}*, That God is not so highly provoked by it as he has declared: Or, *3^{dly}*, That the punishment of it will not be so certain, but will somehow be prevented by Divine mercy: Or, *4^{thly}*, That, at least, it will not be so severe as is represented: Or, *5^{thly}*, That, if all these should fail, yet they may come time enough to prevent all these ill consequences by a late repentance, which they imagine still to be within their power. Each of these I shall inquire into—what stress finners lay on them; and the absurdity of their doing so.

FIRST, *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*; therefore finners persuade themselves that there is no such evil in it as is represented: They feel no ill consequences of it—there are no bands in their death! They reason as the devil did with Eve—*Ye shall not surely die.* They taste it sweet, without knowing that it will become the gall of asps to them! Is this the case with you? Consider what we said of the evil of sin above—its nature, its consequences. The *wicked must be turned into hell*—Sin, *when finished*, bringeth forth death. You cannot see all the evil of it at present; this is only the sowing, hereafter is the reaping-time. Sinners at present lay up a treasure, afterwards it shall be measured out to them.

them. God is concerned to support the dignity of his laws; and there he has declared, it shall be woe to the wicked.

SECONDLY, *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*, finners imagine that God is not so highly provoked or displeased with sin as is commonly represented. We imagine that God is such an one as ourselves, and that, like ours, his wrath should break out suddenly. God complains of finners treating him thus, Psalm l. It is certain men form some such groundless notion, and it is natural; because things unseen move us little—but nothing can be more groundless. God is not less provoked, because no transports of passion are seen in him; HE is pure and unmixed reason; HIS justice always acts in a consistency with wisdom and goodness; HIS threatenings and rewards he makes the object of faith for the present. Consider his severe threatenings—Can he not be in earnest? Is he obliged to threaten in vain? Shall his word return empty? You will believe it hereafter, when you see his frown, and hear his sentence—he is concerned to make it good: You will then find that no words are sufficient to express it! Why did his justice exact the utmost satisfaction from Christ? Has not God born long with finners, and punished them at last?—Remember Nineveh. And the time will come, when finners shall call on him in vain. See Prov. i. 25, 26, &c.

THIRDLY, *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*, finners are apt to imagine that the punishment of sin is not so certain; but it may be, some way or other, prevented altogether; and they may have peace, though they walk after the imaginations of their own hearts. (I speak of persons
resolute

resolute in sin.) They look on it as a very distant event; and we know what effect this has. They have escaped hitherto; and why not hereafter? Though he has some doubts, yet he thinks his fears may be greater than his danger—We are accustomed to reason so. Among men every delay gives a possibility of escaping; but not so with God. See the two verses following the text: A thousand years are with God as one day; no time, no accident can disappoint him! What certainty would we have?—Any other than the thing admits of? Are we sure that we shall die? O sinner, you are imposing on yourself, and a deceived heart turns you aside, and the delay makes it most certain, that the justice of God will execute the threatening!

FOURTHLY, *Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed*, therefore sinners imagine that their punishment will not, at least, be so severe—"If patience stays his hand, why may he not moderate his sentence? Why not, in the time of judgment, remember mercy? His patience seems to be a pledge that he will." Thus they reason; but that is not all. Men, believing God to be altogether such as themselves, form an undigested notion of his forgiveness; they do not know how, nor why—but they are grossly mistaken! Justice is an essential attribute of the Divine nature. The terms of his mercy are bounded in scripture. To prevent mistakes, he has assured us, that he will be particularly severe against the abusers of his goodness. See Deut. xxix. 19, 20. With respect to severity, the argument is stronger the other way. Justice delayed is, therefore, more severe, and fills up the vials of wrath, as we fill up the measure of iniquity! Long preparation portends dreadful execution! His
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arrows are wheted, in the meantime. And, *Finally*, His oath is interposed to put an end to all doubts. Alas! you know not God, my Brethren—*He is not a man that he should lie*. Will he that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, violate the eternal laws of his government for you? He spared not the angels; why should he spare you? Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Every thing contrary to this is a deceit—a refuge of lies: What is its foundation? Is it in the Divine word? No—Fly then to the true city of refuge.

FIFTHLY, *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*, finners think all shall be amended by a late repentance. This is the most dangerous deceit of all, and the most frequent. Persons think they may sin a while longer, and knock time enough to be heard: But you have no security that you may not be overtaken next moment. God will certainly disappoint hopes so injurious to him. But of this, because the most dangerous deceit, more, if the Lord will, hereafter.

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SERMON

S E R M O N XLIII.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

LAST opportunity, I mentioned to you a most frequent and dangerous abuse of the Divine long-suffering. Sinners imagine, that, should every thing else fail, yet the ill consequences of their sin may be prevented by a late repentance—in old age, or at the hour of death. The work of salvation, they think, may be done suddenly. Things they cannot satisfy themselves about now, may be rectified hereafter. They think one repentance will clear off all their sins; that they shall have time for this, they do not doubt. This is the most subtle snare of Satan; others destroy thousands, this its ten thousands! This is a delusion that takes best, and, I believe, is a net spread under many of your feet. O! let conscience speak, and answer, whether you are so imposed on: Say, have you, or do you still pacify your consciences with this thought? and does it ward off the blows of the Divine word? Then let me beg you to hearken and attend to these following considerations. In the

FIRST place, That you have no security that the sentence shall not be executed upon you the very next moment. We have a reprieve, but not to a limited time. How know you that the decree is not ready to bring forth? Has it not been so with many?

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We stand on the brink of a precipice. Will it not be a righteous thing with God to push us over, making us examples of his justice—to expose us to the scorn of devils and wicked spirits? Remember the rich man in the gospel. Are you sure, then, that God may not cause the breath to cease from your nostrils immediately? Is it fit he should be patient, that you may sin on? Is it fit that you should risk your eternal happiness on this peradventure?—"I may hereafter have an opportunity, which, while I have at present, I will not make use of." You may silence conscience as to this; but I defy you to answer it. If you knew what salvation were, you would not risk it on such terms. But, in the

SECOND place, Consider, that to continue resolute or undisturbed in a sinful course, upon the hopes of future repentance, because God does not execute judgment, is a mocking of God; against which he is concerned, in justice, to shew his displeasure. If there were any safety in this course, then it would follow, that God might be safely insulted! This is saying, on the matter, that we will fall on a way to circumvent the Almighty, and disappoint him of his design, and take hold of heaven by a way of our own—affront his justice, and yet escape punishment. It is certain God never designed his patience to be an encouragement to sin. On the contrary, he calls to improve it into speedy repentance; this abuse, therefore, is endeavouring to snatch weapons from the Almighty, wherewith to fight against him. I appeal to yourselves, if I aggravate the matter. I ask you, is it reasonable to expect that God will be mocked? Must not your case be someway more dangerous than you imagine? Consider seriously, Will infinite wisdom be over-reached?

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Will you attain heaven in opposition to God?—You listen to such advice as the devil's to Eve; and, if you persist, the consequence will be the same. But, in the

THIRD place, Consider, that this way of abusing the Divine long-suffering, and hardening your heart because sentence is not executed, proceeds on this absurd supposition, that repentance is at any time in your own power—such faith and repentance as will be accepted of God; probably you never doubted this, but this is an evidence you know little of the matter. Were fair words all, then you might, perhaps, promise on these—bowing down the head as a bulrush, even a few crocodile tears, and promises of amendment; but all these, and greater, God despises. See Isa. i. 10. True evangelical repentance and godly sorrow must be wrought in the heart by God. True Christians know this; they feel the burden of an hard heart. Are you sure that Divine assistance, however feignedly sought, will be given you at any time? Does not God threaten to withdraw his grace, and gives this as the reason of his doing so?—*Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded,* Prov. i. 24. Have you not seen many old sinners quite stupid; because God has given over dealing with them any longer? I do not pretend to limit Divine grace; but I am sure there is great ground of fear—*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able!* Luke xiii. 24.

FOURTHLY, To shew you what little reason you have to depend on these resolutions, or to harden your hearts in hopes of future repentance; consider that these resolutions, on which you risk your souls, can-

not

not be sincere—I mean that there is no such thing as resolving seriously to repent at all, without resolving to do it just now. Consider what repentance is. Can a man resolve to hate sin hereafter, and indulge it now? Explain yourselves, my Brethren: Can he resolve seriously to part with it, and stick fast to it at present? It is absurd! Your resolutions are foolish—cannot stand before temptation, or give you security for the future; they may land in a pet at sin, I own, but no more: Yet on these hang your hopes! O open your eyes!—you are asleep if you do not feel what condition you are in; and are likely to sleep unto death! For observe, in the

Fifth and *last* place, That this abuse of the Divine long-suffering; namely, Flattering ourselves that we may be converted and healed hereafter, has a certain tendency to harden the heart, and render our case more and more desperate. Hereby sin turns more familiar, and less odious; hereby conscience loses its force. Observe how we are reconciled to every thing by degrees! Thus natural hardness increases; at the same time judicial plagues are inflicted. Whatever difficulties stand in the way of your return will grow stronger. God may, in justice, permit this. At the time thou proposest to repent, the Spirit may strive no more—Satan may rage more fiercely, and the bands of death be stronger. What do you expect from that season?—*If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?* Jer. xii. 5. I appeal to you, whether former delays have had this influence. With respect to repentance, with respect to trial of
your

your state, are you more inclined this day than when you began. Observe if old sinners are more tender, more deeply serious. Experience declares against it. Such will be the case with you; and therefore your present delay makes your case next to desperate, and shews your hopes to be ill-founded. I have insisted the more on this, because I think it is one of the chief deceits of Satan. O that I could draw you to Christ! I am afraid lest few apply what I have said to themselves. O that the Spirit would do it! Can every one of you say for himself, that he comes up to the character of a Christian? What are, then, the ground of your hopes? Do you believe that there is a God? What then are your resolutions?—The question requires an immediate answer; a delay has death in it. This is, probably, the last year many of you will see. O do not run upon destruction with a glaring testimony in your consciences against you! Many have heard this word who believe it now. Let not your faith come too late.

BEFORE I go on to the application, I would step a little out of the way of the method, to offer some directions to such, if haply any such are among you, as cannot but own themselves to have been hitherto in this snare: Let all sorts observe it. And,

1st, I address you in the words of the Apostle Peter, *Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee*, Acts viii. 22. God's hand is lifted up, but may be stayed. We have heard that he is gracious: Who knows but this may be the time of his shewing mercy? Cry incessantly to him, earnestly, humbly; with a deep sense of guilt, confess your sin, and accuse your-

yourselves in his presence, like men ready to step in-
to eternity.

2dly, For your encouragement, know that there is forgiveness with him through Christ. The avenger of blood pursues you—fly to this city of refuge: He delights to glorify his justice and mercy through Christ, and to break the snare of the devil! Your souls are fettered indeed, but he can break the bands of death. If you have been treasuring up wrath, and adding new seals thereto, the blood of Christ shall burst them open! Oh! he is a glorious Redeemer, the half cannot be told of him! Come and see—never any who sincerely came miscarried! The prize is in his hand—love is in his heart; his open arms are ready to receive you—a shelter to cover you! In the

3d and last place, Let me intreat you, on the one hand, to beware of despair, and, on the other, of presumption; both are dishonourable to God. Satan will probably tempt you to the one or other; by despair he frights from God—by presumption he flatters with false peace. Look on any thing that would make you think it is too late to repent, as coming from the devil. But beware of having the wound healed slightly. Commit yourselves into the hands of the Physician of souls.—May he restore peace to your souls; and, by his Almighty arm, pluck you as brands out of the burning. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XLIV.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

WHAT has been said on this subject may suggest the following reflections:

FIRST, What has been said may give us a lively idea of the blindness, depravity, and degeneracy of human nature. Sin is an evil work; our souls are overspread with it, as with a leprosy! Consider the alienation of heart from God; the carnality of affections, the perverseness of our will—these are little thought of! Consider the external walk of most professed Christians. If all sin is so dreadful as was said, how corrupt must that heart be in which it reigns! To set it in a clearer light, consider what entertainment the calls of Heaven, and long-suffering of God meet with in the world: The blessings he bestows on us are turned into poison; his goodness and mercy affronted! At the same time sin is thought light of, and an offence against the Majesty of God, a thing of no moment! Consider then, O man, from whence, and how low thou art fallen! Turn thine eyes inward, if thou canst bear the sight. Think how a Holy God must look upon thee! Perhaps thou art pure in thine own eyes; because ignorant of the evil nature of sin, or of the purity that Christianity requires. But think how God looks at thy heart! Is it found following after him? Is he the source of thy

thy comfort—of the delight of thy soul? or, do not other things yet carry off your affections? You have little reason to be proud, or to value yourselves on your own righteousness.

SECONDLY, From what has been said we may infer, That the prosperity of wicked men in this world, is no ground of objecting against Divine providence, nor does it give them any certainty of final impunity. This has been found trying to the faith of God's people, (see Psal. lxxiii. 11, 12.); and emboldens the spirits of wicked men also—*How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?* Even when they cannot pretend to reason themselves out of the belief of an hereafter, prosperity hardens their hearts: They have no changes; and therefore fear not God. Now, what has been said natively leads us to the Psalmist's view of the matter—*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction*, Psal. lxxiii. 18. There are wise reasons for delaying the punishment—to manifest justice and mercy, and to answer other ends of providence. Consider this, ye that forget God—unseen evil pursues you! A blow is the heavier the longer it is of falling. When they say, Peace; then sudden destruction is at hand! It is not necessary for God immediately to execute his sentence; for we are still within his reach: It is sufficient if, upon the whole, in the final event and issue of things, he render to every one according to his works.

THIRDLY, From what has been said we may infer, That the pretended grounds and reasons which wicked men have for speaking peace to themselves in a course of sin, are refuges of lies. Ignorance and blindness are the great supports of Satan's kingdom. Men durst not go on in avowed rebellion against God,

if they had a lively impressi^on of their danger ; and therefore they speak peace to themselves on false grounds. Witness the visible security among the bulk of professing Christians ! Most of the deceits that mislead them are reducible to the abuse of Divine mercy ; how groundless they are you have seen. You may think the bitterness of death past ; but the Lord is not slack concerning his purpose : You may think it safe to delay ; but the Judge standeth at the door : You may claim friendship with Christ on account of your profession ; but if you can produce no better claim, he will discard you as workers of iniquity ! In *fine*, there is but one way to heaven, and that is by Christ ; all others lead to hell. None have interest in Christ, who are under the habitual government of any one sin ; therefore consider what ground you stand on. You may think of being admitted, as you are, into the assembly of the just ; but God will strike you speechless. But, in the

FOURTH place, From what has been said we may infer, That it is a just and righteous thing with God to punish obstinate sinners with an everlasting destruction ; this punishment is adapted to the demerit of sin. God always acts according to the rules of strict justice. Sin is an offence against God ; and the demerit of it must be judged of from the dignity of the person offended, and our obligation to him. Thus it is an evil, greater than which cannot be conceived ; and, therefore, it is punished accordingly—But, above all, gospel sinners have nothing to hope ; their misery is past all peradventure ! Consider that despised long-suffering makes this the more certain. We may easily judge that so remarkable a dispensation is not in vain. Eternal punishment is necessary to balance what we owe to Divine

vine justice! What think you of eternity—the worm that dieth not—the fire that is not quenched? where hope shall be for ever extinguished—where despair and anguish reign for ever! Judge your own folly now, O sinner, and try if sin be not bitter by this rule. The terrors of the Lord are not to be sported with. Your ears have never heard the cries of the damned!—Yet God is not left without a witness. In the

FIFTH and *last* place, From what was said we may infer the true value and great importance of a season of grace, and the hazard we run in misimproving it. You see God spares not, to no purpose; his mercy or justice will be glorified. Now is the time when the important event is on trial: Life is the season of trial—death of executing the sentence. Your all is at stake, my Brethren, and for any thing you or I know, now may be the important moment on which your fate turns. Do not expect warning in another manner—God has not promised it; he gives you fair warning now—lets you know what you have at stake—assures you, positively, that this is the accepted time; and requires a peremptory answer. Another messenger, not to be refused, is at hand with his last summons; and you are now commanded to prepare for him. Upon the whole of what has been said, let me now address you in a word of *exhortation*. And, in the

FIRST Place, I exhort every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to enquire what improvement you have made hitherto of that long-suffering which has been exercised towards you. Here I am speaking to every one of you; you are all partakers of the mercy. I have told you the ends of it. What improvement have you, then, made of it? My

Brethren, such a treasure is worth enquiring about ; The use you have made of it, has either brought you nearer to God or further from him. Take not, then, rest to your eyes, or slumber to your eye-lids, till you bring this matter to a point. But,

SECONDLY, If your consciences testify against you, that you have abused the long-suffering of God ; then let me *exhort* you now to begin, with considering whom you have to do with. To treat the Most High with contempt, is a crime that wants a name ! The God you have to do with, is a jealous God ; and, though long-suffering, will by no means clear the guilty. In the

THIRD place, Let me, in a particular manner, caution the younger part of my audience against the snares of the devil, that are with great subtilty laid for their souls. You, my Dear Friends, are most in danger ; Satan solicits you—the arguments seem plausible. Believe it, the first steps towards that hardness of heart, spoke of in the text, are dangerous, and often fatal ; many have been cast down wounded by them. The devil solicits you, who are in the flower of youth, into a tract that has landed many others in final apostacy. Oh, your danger is great ! Commit your souls to the keeping of Christ ; he stands and knocks. Oh, hear him !

FOURTHLY, Let me call upon these who have been already seduced into the snare of the devil, in some measure, to fly to the city of refuge, ere the Avenger of blood overtake them. Oh, that there were such hearts in you ! Oh, that I could persuade you to this ! Do you know that God waits ; that you dally on the brink of perdition—that every day adds new weight to your chains ? Have you a moment to deliberate ?

or,

or, is there a choice left? Oh! shall God be provoked to leave? or, shall the devil triumph over his prey? God forbid! In the

FIFTH and *last* place, To conclude this subject, let me call on these souls to bless the Lord, who have already been delivered from the snare. Many, no worse than you, my Dear Brethren, have been dragged by those chains to the bottomless pit. Your souls are escaped, as birds out of the snare of the fowler! Remember who made you to differ—Say, *Not unto us, but to thy name be the glory.* Stick fast by Christ. Will ye also go away? Ransomed souls should be self-devoted souls. Christ has bought you dear! Glorify him with your souls and bodies. For your encouragement, know that he will perfect his own work: Your souls shall be delivered from all their enemies: Your full deliverance is fast working out, and will soon be perfected in glory! *Amen.*

S E R M O N XLV.

GENESIS xxxii. 26,

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

EVERY one that knows any thing of a Christian life must have experienced, less or more, the violent struggle between faith and unbelief. Perhaps it is not possible to find a way to express the whole of this matter ; but God has his own way of giving support to his people. The Spirit bearing witness by, and to the promise, sometimes helps infirmities. The examples of earnest, violent, and triumphant faith in the saints are also highly blest—they strike fire into the soul. A Christian delights to follow the footsteps of one who he is sure hath overcome. The text and context afford us an ever-memorable instance of wrestling and triumphing faith. Jacob was now in a strait; he had the promise, indeed, formerly, but wanted it renewed and accomplished. Christians sometimes lose view of promises formerly received. He sets himself to seek the Lord. Behold, the Lord appears in a wonderful manner—the Word in a human form ; (he loved our nature long before his incarnation!) that is, was God himself, and in the person of the Son. See Hof. xii. 3, 4. What outward wrestling was here, I am not to enquire ; but sure it was chiefly managed by prayer and supplication, in faith. From what past on both sides, in this heavenly interview, I would offer,

fer, through Divine assistance, something proper for our present direction. And,

I. I shall endeavour, shortly, to explain the design of this seeming backwardness on God's part—*Let me go, for the day breaketh*; and shew how it may be exemplified in the case of true Christians.

II. I shall explain, also, the exercise of this wrestling faint, as expressed in the words—*I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*.

III. Offer some encouragements to imitate his example. And,

IV. Make improvement of what may be said.

FIRST, then, *I am to explain the nature and design of the seeming backwardness on God's part; and shew how it may be exemplified in the case of true Christians.* Scripture has drawn a veil over a great part of what passed here; only we know what Jacob wanted. It looks, at first sight, like a refusal—a rejecting his supplications, or not minding them. Unbelief would make a positive denial; for it always makes haste—it would say that it was presumption to proceed; that, after what passed, all promises, however strong, however applicable, could not be pled. Christian, thou, I am sure, dost remember when such a plea was carried on in thy heart. Yet there is wonderful condescension too; he treats him kindly—"It is not fit any should be witnesses of this interview; it must be secret, and now day dawns; let it alone till another time." Thus God; he delays visiting the captive in bonds, and will yet send a kindly message to him, and give a ray of his countenance to keep up hope. There is an intimation also of the strength and power of faith—a hint of the way he is to proceed in: "Thou
"detaimest

"taineft me—let me go." Thus God, when about to beftow the bleffing, conveys fecret encouragement to hold on by fome word of grace—*The Beloved puts in his hand by the bole of the door*, Song v. 4. Now, God's dealings with a foul have their language: Unbelief is forward to interpret it wrong! Perhaps, Chriftian, God has fpoken thus to thee, in thy apprehenfion.

FIRST, When thy prayers have feemed to be denied, or forgotten by him. This is a difcouragement, under which thou haft wreffled—thou haft long looked out for the morning: It has been as a fword to thy foul, when they faid, "Where is thy God? where are thy prayers? where the promise thou pledeft? where the promise fealed at fuch a time? Is thy wound healed? Are thy expectations answered?" This is a trial to thee, fuch as Jacob had. Sure fome of you know your name here. Now God feems to fay, *Let me go*, wrefle no more.

SECONDLY, God tries a Chriftian by fuch language as this, when he denies him converfe or fellowfhip with him in the ordinances, private or public; or, at leaft, according to the language of the fcripture, vifits him only as a way-faring man, and withdraws his Spirit. The Chriftian has little life in duty—little access to God; the breasts of confolation in the promise are much dried up; then God feems to have forgot him: Hence unbelief reflects on God's way—" *This evil is of the Lord*: Trouble not the Master: God abhors his "own ordinances for thy fake!" This is hard to a Chriftian, who cannot be fatisfied without finding God in duty.

THIRDLY, God tries a Chriftian by fuch language as this, when the view of matters with his foul is fo dark, that he neither knows how to make language of his
cafe,

case, nor surmount the difficulties thrown between God and him. Guilt and deadness complicated are a dreadful disease—a soul become like a wilderness! Satan knows how to throw dust over us. Every thing then seems dark. A Christian then looks on the right and left hand, and none seems to know him, Psal. cxlii. 3, 4. The language of the heart then is, The child is dead, trouble not the Master: Hope is cut off and perished. Now, if God is with me, Why all this evil? says unbelief. This is a sore trial to wrestle under! Perhaps thou, Christian, hast one or all of these: Thou art almost brought to keep silence, Psal. xciv. 17. However, thy groans are heard, when closed lips can hardly utter thy complaints! Now, under such circumstances there may be a wrestling. God leads by the hand, and supports, though we know not it is he that heals. There was wrestling, indeed, here, which I am to propose to your imitation; and shall, therefore,

SECONDLY, *Explain to you the exercise of this wrestling saint, as expressed in the words—I will not let thee go, except thou blest me.* Oh, Christian! see and be ashamed; or rather, see and admire, and imitate. Now, this is but a summary of his exercise; which enlarged appears to contain,

FIRST, A vehement importunity and earnestness of desire for the blessing, and the performance of the promise formerly made. The precious opportunity of God drawing near stirred him up: This is a time, says he, to get a blessing. There is no cold desire here, no lip-labour. Whatever vain men talk, cold devotion is an absurdity! Hence we are told, *He wept, and made supplication.* Thus, Christian, hast thou a re-

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quest to make? Do it like a criminal begging his life—
 “Give me Christ, or else I die. Lord, I am a captive;
 “Satan is like to overpower me; darkness over-
 “whelms me; I stretch my hands to thee.” Psa.
 cxliii. 6, 7. We cannot exceed here. Christ, the un-
 speakable Gift, is the prize—his Spirit; his grace;
 the repairing thy lost soul! Why, a view of this makes
 it like a fire in the bowels not to be restrained.

SECONDLY, This exercise includes in it, an earnest
 and violent adherence to God in spite of difficulty:
 It is as if he had said, “I am resolved; I can take no
 “denial; I know I drop into perdition if I lose this
 “hold; if he speak hardly to me, I deserve much
 “worse; but whether shall I go?” But what encour-
 agement hast thou for this? says unbelief. I know
 he may plead against me; but will he do it? Nay, he
 will put strength in me! God’s word, indeed, says,
Wait on the Lord: But, perhaps, its voice is almost
 drowned with that which arises from delays and dis-
 appointments. We trusted it had been he—Not a
 favourable smile from God, as to sense—no appear-
 ance how this case shall be cleared up; yet I will wait
 and look, as if he had said: Not Satan, nor unbelief
 itself shall make me quit my hold! O wonderful!
 Grace triumphs indeed. O Christian! get thy hold
 fastened here. As the Lord liveth, thou shalt be
 safe. But,

THIRDLY, Comparing this exercise with what pre-
 ceded, it included an earnest pleading and pressing
 home of the promise; either promises formerly ap-
 plied, or such as are now seen to answer the case. He
 asked a blessing. See what relation it had to the
 promise, chap. xxviii. 13, &c. “Didst thou not pro-
 “mise to bless me—to deal well with me? I am come

“to

“to put thee in remembrance; thou wilt not surely deny thyself.” This is the way of the Lord’s people. When the Spirit, Christ’s witness, comes as a remembrancer, then the word has life—is seen suitable; and therefore pled. View, in this part of the exercise, the promise as in Christ—applicable to thee through him, 2 Cor. i. 20.; freely given of God! To whom? To whom but the needy—to whom but those to whom Christ is offered! Faith, viewing the promises as in Christ, sees a sure foundation—pleads it; it is God’s own pledge left with thee, for this purpose. Sure it were blasphemy against God’s grace, to say, there is a soul whose case is such that no promise can answer it. But, in the

FOURTH place, The expression imports a continuance in the exercise of faith, and desire and resolution not to give over—“If once seeking do not prevail, yet “I will continue: I cannot want the blessing; therefore I will not let thee go.” This deserves peculiar attention. God tries his people’s faith by delays; he loves the exercise of it; and therefore draws it forth thus. Unbelief says, this evil is of the Lord; it is in vain to seek or serve him. A proud beggar takes it amiss if refused—not so a Christian; he does not make haste, though brought to fear that hope is perished, Lam. iii. 18.; yet he putteth his mouth in the dust, &c. verse 29. True faith is humble—“I deserve to “be refused. Should I take any thing hardly from “God?—The blessing is worth waiting for: If asking “does not prevail, I will seek; if seeking does not, I will “knock.” Sentiments of this kind are essential to faith, and evidence it to be genuine. But,

FIFTHLY, Observe here, he was resolved to embrace the present opportunity while God was near, and, if I

may say so, in speaking terms with him. Something like the Spouse, who held her Beloved. So did poor souls with Christ in the days of his flesh; when he came to a place, multitudes of poor creatures attended him. There are seasons when grace is a bestowing. God perhaps is giving some encouragement; then press forward: He is inviting to a solemn ordinance; then we should protest we will not go without a blessing. Make use of every circumstance for encouragement.

SIXTHLY, All this was expressed with humility, reverence, and contrition of heart. There was weeping and supplication, Hof. xii. 4. The nearer a Christian is to God, he is the more emptied—a truly wrestling soul looks on itself as dust and ashes. I cannot express this fully; but truest boldness has greatest abasement: Hence a pleading frame is generally a tender one. Christians do not know how to lay themselves low enough before God; their desires are expressed in sighs and groans not to be uttered. Thus I have endeavoured to lay before you something of this wrestling exercise, so far as the text points it out: But who can tell the half? He who searches the heart alone knows it! I do it for your imitation; it is seasonable at this time? But Satan dreads it, and will endeavour to blunt you in it; therefore, let me

THIRDLY, *Offer some encouragements to this exercise*, such as, I hope, chiefly tend to answer and silence unbelief and fearfulness; and may God bless them.

FIRST, Does Satan, then, tempt you? Does discouragements prevail, and hands hang down for such reasons as above? Consider, such importunate, earnest
wrestlings

wrestlings as these give glory to God, and the more so when attended with difficulty. Abraham's faith is peculiarly said to have done so, because strong. Are temptations to staggering peculiar?—Say not, my difficulties are greater than those of others: This is a common stratagem of unbelief. Why, if so, all that is to be said is, thou hast a peculiar opportunity of glorifying God—rejoice if it be so. Then the exercise called to is the highest acknowledgement of God's faithfulness—is a practical homage to Christ, and acknowledgement of his work; it is also an expression of trust in his power—it is a magnifying of his word.

But,

SECONDLY, Consider, the exercise of a wrestling soul is a sweet-smelling savour in God's sight. See Song ii. 14. If a Christian is praying, and mourning, and pleading, God puts the tears in his bottle. Christ sees there the travail of his soul; God sees the fruits of his Spirit—they are his pleasant fruits: It is meet thou think nothing of it thyself. Yet, Christian, thy groanings, forgotten by thee, have come in remembrance before God. But,

THIRDLY, Consider, Christian, the urgency of the case! Canst thou want the blessing? Art thou content to live without Christ? Art thou content to be led captive by Satan and thy devouring lusts?—Say, Shall Christ and I part? Shall I want the blessing when it is to be got? Ask thy heart about these matters: See if lip-labour is enough here. But,

FOURTHLY, Think, God is drawing nigh thee for this purpose!—God in Christ, Christ in the fulness of his grace—God as a hearer of prayer! But, oh! Where—where shall I find him? God is in Christ—Christ is in the word; as the Lord liveth it is so. Satan, perhaps,

perhaps, blinds thee that thou see'st him not ; but Christ, in this gospel, draws near to every one of us—in the sacrament also ; and under all these characters wherein thou needest him ! yea, he is putting arguments in thy mouth ! He will not plead against thee ; but he will put strength in thee. His name, his promise, his glory, as concerned, are all to be pled—assurance of one to back the plea, even the Intercessor in heaven ! Oh ! art you not saying, then, *I will not let thee go, except thou blest me.* To encourage you further, observe, in the

FIFTH and *last* place, What success Jacob's wrestling had : He prevailed ! And what was he ?—Owned indeed of God, but had nothing of his own. The foundation of his faith may be a foundation to thine. Come, venture thy soul upon this bottom, and take God's word for thy success. *Amen.*

SERMON XLVI.

{2 THESSALONIANS iii. 1.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.

UPON the last occasion, my Brethren, that you had of meeting together in this place, we had laid before us, in a very proper and suitable address, the great weight and difficulty of the ministerial office, in terms used by the great Apostle Paul himself, who, tho' he was endued, in an eminent manner, with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, yet upon taking a view of the importance of his commission, and the awful consequences of it that were to take place, either in the salvation or damnation of sinners, could not but cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things?* It is, or ought to be the same gospel that is now preached to you; the consequences of it, either as the savour of life unto life, or that of death unto death, are still the same. God still beholds, with jealous eyes, the manner in which the gospel is preached, and the entertainment you give to the word of his Son Jesus. And the preachers of it, alas! often weak and fallible men of like passions with yourselves, carrying the most important message from heaven to earth, are responsible to their great Master, for their faithfulness in delivering it. How much better reason, then, have we to say, *Who is sufficient for these things?* The task, indeed, is difficult; but we serve the best of Masters, who *sends*

none

none a warfare on their own charges. As he knows our weakness, he has laid us under an happy necessity of renouncing all confidence in the flesh, and commands us to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. It is this alone, my Brethren, that can give us any reasonable encouragement to undertake this difficult, though honourable service; and it is upon this that the success must entirely depend. And as God every where manifests himself as a fountain of grace and strength, as having laid upon Christ every thing necessary for the supply of our wants, with this view chiefly, to stir up our earnest prayers to him, to encourage us to ask that we may receive—on this consideration, I say, I may justly intreat the assistance of your prayers at a throne of grace, for obtaining the great and valuable ends of a gospel ministry, in these words of the Apostle, *Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.* He looked upon the persons to whom he wrote as Brethren; and by this affectionate appellation, in which he acknowledges the relation they stood in to him, as children of the same Father, he endeavours to call up in their minds, that tenderness and affection that might engage them to wish well to the success of his ministry—to employ their earnest and fervent prayers at the throne of grace on his behalf. The end and design of these prayers might, perhaps, be mentioned, not only to direct them what to pray for, but also as a motive drawn from that love and regard which they bore to their common Lord and Master; and the concern that every true Christian would be sure to have for the glory and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom—*Pray for us,* says he, *that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.*

fied. The design of this address, therefore, that the Apostle makes to the Theſſalonians, and which, after his example, we would ſolemnly make to you, is, as if he had ſaid, “I earneſtly intreat you, by all the ties
 “and endearments of an affectionate brother—by all
 “that love and regard you entertain towards a dear
 “Redeemer, whoſe word we preach—by the glory of
 “God, and the ſalvation of your own ſouls, which are
 “ſo immediately concerned in this matter, that when-
 “ever you make your addreſs to the Throne of grace,
 “either by yourſelves or with others—whenever you
 “are enabled to draw moſt near to God, and to fill
 “your mouth with arguments before him—whenever
 “your hearts are moſt enlarged with the inward aſſiſt-
 “ance or interceſſion of the Spirit of Grace, then you
 “would *pray for us*, who, however unworthy and in-
 “ſufficient, are called to watch for your ſouls: as they
 “that muſt give account.” Whatever reaſons the A-
 poſtle could have for this importunate requeſt, may,
 with much greater reaſon, be urged in our preſent
 caſe; and, therefore, let me beg your attention a lit-
 tle, while we endeavour,

I. To explain, ſhortly, the nature of that *end* which the Apoſtle propoſes as the deſign of his miniſtry in general, and of this exhortation in particular; name-
ly, That the word of the Lord may have free courſe,
and be glorified.

II. To offer ſome directions for the practice of that duty; or ſhew you what it is that we would have you to beg of God on our behalf.

III. To offer ſome conſiderations to engage and preſs you to the conſtant and faithful diſcharge of this duty. And,

Laſtly, To make a reflection or two on the whole.

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FIRST,

FIRST, *I begin with explaining, shortly, the nature of that END which the Apostle seems to have proposed as the design of his ministry in general, and of this exhortation in particular; namely, That the word of the Lord might have free course, and be glorified.* And, for this purpose, let it be observed, in the

FIRST place, That the great intention of the revelation of God's will—of the institution of the ministry, and the preaching of the gospel, is, to manifest the glory of the Divine perfections, by putting down the strong-holds of the kingdom of darkness, and bringing sinners again unto God. Hence we are told, that for this purpose was the Son of God manifested—that he might destroy the works of the devil; that he was cut off to finish transgression and make an end of sin; and that he was sent from heaven to bless us, by turning us from our iniquities. If we consider the doctrine, the example, the death and sufferings of our Lord, we find them all tending to this great view; and that ministry which he committed to his Apostles, and ordered them to transmit to faithful men, in all future ages, was instituted with the same design. The Apostle Paul, accordingly, speaking of himself in the character of an Ambassador for Christ, standing in his stead, and speaking his words, prays and beseeches us to be *reconciled to God*; imitating the stile and manner of his blessed Master, who formerly stood and cried to all those who were athirst, *to come unto him and drink!* If we consider the word, indeed, only in itself, it is no more than a dead letter, and often becomes the savour of death unto death: But, if we consider it as an institution of God, backed by his promise, and quickened by his Spirit, then we will find it *to be the power of God unto salvation—that incorruptible seed that*

that brings forth fruit unto eternal life in the souls of the Lord's people; and it is then glorified when this is obtained—then it has free course when it is preached far and wide, and triumphs over all the opposition made to it by the devil and the world from without, and the strong man of sin within; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Then, I say, it is glorified, when the doctrine of Christ crucified, which to many is a stumbling-block and foolishness, becomes a powerful mean, in the hand of the Spirit, for converting the soul that formerly lay in sin, and raising light in the mind that was formerly overspread with darkness. Which leads me to observe, in the

SECOND place, That the gospel, in this great design of it, is glorified by being made the means of reaching conviction to the secure and hardened sinner, and taking him off from the refuges of lies, in which his soul was formerly detained the captive of the prince of darkness. Thus was the word of God made glorious in the Apostle Peter's preaching, when many were pricked at the heart, and made to cry out, *Men and brethren, What shall we do?* When those who formerly would give defiance, as it were, to the terrors of the Lord, and make a mock at sin—that abominable thing which his soul hates, are made to tremble at his reproofs, and cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Hereby God gives testimony to the word of his grace, manifests its heavenly and divine original, and honours it as the mean of pulling down the strongest holds of Satan's kingdom. The spiritual darkness of the understanding is one of the strongest chains by which

the grand enemy keeps the house in peace. The sinner thinks himself whole, and, therefore, sees no need of a Physician—he mocketh at fear, and rushes onward like the horse unto the battle; but sometimes, when he least expects it, the word of the Lord lays hold upon him; the purity and spirituality of the law represent his deformity of heart, the awful threatenings of it awake him from the dream of false peace, and make him a terror to himself! And God glorifies his word as the instrument of this victory over the gates of hell and death. But, in the

THIRD place, The word of the Lord is likewise glorified by being the mean of revealing Christ to the souls of his people, both as the object of faith, at their first conversion; and also, as the fountain of all joy, grace, and strength, in the gradual discoveries that are made of him in the course of a Christian life. The most glorious sight that a soul can get on this side of heaven, is that which it gets of the Lord Christ, when *he that commanded light to shine out of darkness shines into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* Now, it is by the word, quickened by the Holy Spirit, that this discovery is made to the soul. The great and precious promises of the gospel are applied by an Almighty hand, as the means of binding up the wounds made in the conscience; and give such a discovery of a glorious Redeemer, in his willingness and ability to save even the person himself, that his soul is drawn out in the exercise of faith in him; and *he counts all things but loss and dung that he may win Christ.* Now this treasure is put in earthen vessels; and, perhaps, on this account the men of the world see no beauty or excellency in it. But let them answer

swer that challenge of the Apostle Paul—*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?* Here we may appeal to the experience of every true Christian, and ask him, what it is that has comforted his soul in distress—what it is that has cleared up his doubts, solved his difficulties, and restored his wandering soul to the paths of righteousness, but the quick and powerful word of God? Is not this the well of salvation, at which the souls that are athirst for the living God drink, and are satisfied? Is it not by this that their souls are filled as with marrow and fatness, so that they praise God with joyful lips? You see, my Brethren, what the Prophet says to this purpose—*I found thy word, and did eat it; and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart*, Jer. xv. 16. It would be endless to name all the particulars that might be mentioned here; but these may suffice to let us see how the word of the Lord is made glorious, by being the instrument of bringing about the great designs of his grace—of working such wonders on the hearts of men, as do as evidently manifest the finger of God as any miracle whatsoever. When he first enlightens the mind, it is by the word of truth; when he cures the broken in heart and grieved in mind, it is by sending his word to heal them; when we are begotten again to a lively hope, it is by the word of truth. *In fine*, The distinguishing character of that peace and joy, passing all understanding, which he gives to the soul, is, that it is spoken by the word of God. Now observe, That the preaching of the gospel is expressly instituted for making these great designs effectual; it is the net in which the souls of men are caught; and the means by which they are built up in holiness and comfort unto salvation. If we were to consider

sider it, indeed, only as in the hands of sinful men, it would appear far from being able to answer such great designs : But the proper strength of it lies in the institution and promise of God, the Author of it ; and on this account every, the most unworthy, servant of Christ may say, after the example of the Apostle Paul, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*. This consideration may well shew you what need we all have to join our prayers together, that these ends may not miscarry in the hands of one, who is of all others the least fit or worthy to preach the Unsearchable Riches of Christ. And I hope you will all remember, my Brethren, that you have given me a just title to demand this from you ; and, at the same time, that the benefit of it will turn to your own account as well as mine. Let me now, in the

SECOND Place, *Offer to you some directions for the practice of this duty that is required of you ; or shew what it is that we would have you to beg of God on our behalf—That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified among you*. And in this I propose, as well to be taught myself in the duty that I owe to God and you, as to put you in mind of what is expected at your hands. In the

FIRST place, then, my Brethren, *Pray for us*, that we may be qualified with proper gifts and graces, for the discharge of that work that lies upon us ; particularly, that we may have such an experimental acquaintance with God and Christ, with the comforts of grace, and the pleasures of religion, as will make it our joy and delight, as well as our duty, to recommend them to others ; that we may be acquainted with the exercises of the Divine life, in such a manner as to be able to direct others in it ; and have such a lively impression of
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the reality of future and invisible things, as will make us earnest and constant in warning, and persuading men to fly from the wrath to come. Oh! pray, my Brethren, that we may not preach an unknown Christ to you; or talk of that love which we do not feel. It is a lively sense of that love passing all understanding, an experimental feeling of it, and a sense how little we are able to do any thing sufficient, even in a way of gratitude, to answer it. It is this alone, I say, that can sweetly constrain us to spend and be spent for Christ; and to devote these souls and bodies, which he has redeemed, to his service: It is this that would make us imitate our great Master and pattern, in going about doing good, and having it as meat and drink to us to do the will of him by whom we are sent. Pray also, that we may have such a judicious acquaintance with Divine truths, as to be in a capacity to illustrate and explain, to recommend and enforce them; that we may be endowed with courage and fortitude to withstand gainfayers; at the same time, with the patience and meekness of the followers of Christ, to gain upon the disobedient; and, withall, that we may have such an humbling sense of our own weakness, as will lead us to the fountain of grace and strength, to seek from God, in prayer and supplication, what we deliver to you in preaching. But,

SECONDLY, *Pray for us*, that we may be helped to preach Christ crucified, as the sum and end of the gospel. The Apostle Paul reckons so much upon this that he tells the Corinthians he was determined to know nothing among them *but Christ, and him crucified!* And well does it become all that are engaged in the same work to follow his example in this. It was, indeed, formerly (at the first publication of Christianity

ty) a *stumbling-block* to the prejudiced Jews, and *foolishness* to the conceited Greeks, to hear a doctrine that taught them to turn their eyes to the cross of Christ, as the source of their joy—the foundation of their hope. But God forbid! my Brethren, that ever we should be ashamed to preach, or you to hear of a crucified Redeemer; rather let us glory in him, and bring all our public exercises as near as our present state will admit of to the temper and spirit of those of glorified saints above, where the name of *Jesus, that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood*, is celebrated with endless praises. You know, my Brethren, that this is expected by our great Master from those that preach the gospel; and as nothing else will be accepted of him, so nothing else can be the mean of saving your souls. Pray, then, that we may be taught to preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord; that his glory may be the end of our work; that his person, his authority, his offices, and his doctrine, may be the matter of it; that the manner of it may distinguish itself from mere discourses on natural religion, by an habitual regard to Christ. Pray, that when we enforce the practice of your duty, we may be taught to do it from such motives as have a special connection with Christ, and that relation in which we stand to him. It is a thing extremely worthy of our notice, that the Apostles of our Lord, particularly the Apostle Paul, however great a Master of reason he was, yet never satisfied himself merely with such moral arguments to any duty as could have been used as well by an Heathen Philosopher as a Christian Divine. He knew too well that the world, by their pretended wisdom, had not formerly known God; and, therefore, while these learned triflers declaimed without success,

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he was made an instrument, through the *foolishness of preaching, of saving them that believed*. If you, therefore, regard the honour of our Redeemer; the salvation of your souls; or would wish that we should be accepted of our great Master at last, pray that God would open to us a door of utterance—that we may teach the mystery of Christ, and make it manifest as we ought, as directed by the Apostle, Col. iv. 3. In the

THIRD place, *Pray for us*, that, in preaching the gospel of Christ, we may be taught rightly to divide the word of truth. This is a duty of a very great extent, upon which the success of the gospel and the good of souls depend more than is commonly imagined: The touching the hearts, and applying to the experience of the hearers, has the most immediate connection with it. Let it, therefore, be our study, and your earnest prayer, that we may be helped to declare the whole counsel of God, in such a manner as to give the doctrine of grace, and the necessity of holiness; the threatenings, and the promises of the gospel, each their due place, and full extent: That we may teach the doctrine of grace in such a manner as not to weaken the obligations to holiness; and the necessity of holiness in such a manner as not to detract from the freedom and sovereignty of the Love of God. *In a word*, Pray earnestly, that we may be directed by the Holy Spirit to apply to the several cases and experience of the hearers, so that saints and sinners, the hypocrite and profane, may be all hit. I repeat it again, that there is more than we can well imagine depends upon this; at the same time, that it is a matter of real difficulty: Therefore let our ear-

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nest prayers be often found joining at a throne of grace for this purpose. In the

FOURTH place, Beg earnestly of God, that we may be kept holy, blameless, and exemplary in the world; in every part of life holding forth the word of truth. It is needless for me to enlarge on what you all very well know—how necessary it is for those that teach holiness unto others to be exemplary in it themselves, in order to give force to their instructions, dignity to their character; and let the world see, as well as hear, that they are in earnest. If, therefore, my Brethren, you wish well to the interest of religion, let it be your earnest prayer and mine, that we may be kept from even every appearance of evil; that the good hand of God may be about us in such a manner, that religion may never be evil spoken of on our account; or any sinner hardened through our fault. Oh! my Brethren, consider how important a thing it is, not only to have our own salvation to work out with *fear and trembling*, but to be answerable, so far as our example can go, even for the souls of others. May we not tremble at the thought of having the blood of some unhappy soul required at our hands, who, perhaps, by our fault or neglect, was wrecked and lost for ever? Let me, therefore, earnestly, and in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, beseech your earnest prayers, that we may, in this respect, be kept free of the blood of all men; particularly, that we may be kept from giving way, through a false modesty, or rather cowardice, to any thing inconsistent with the purity of Christianity, either in our superiors or equals. That we may be kept from prostituting the sacred office, by not daring to check any appearance of evil, where we are called so to do. *In a word*, That we may

may be taught to live over our sermons—being exemplary in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity. In the

FIFTH and *last* place, *Pray for us*, that we may be successful in our work, and accepted of God in it; that our own souls may be saved, and we may give up our accounts with joy to Christ, our great Master. Be earnest, my Brethren, at a throne of grace, that we may be owned and blessed of God, for gathering in many souls to Christ, and turning sinners from darkness to light; that our ministrations may tend to the comfort and edification of the godly; and that many such may appear at the tribunal of God, as witnesses that we have not run unsent, or laboured in vain. It may well make the difficulties of the work lighter, if your prayers shall contribute any thing towards our entertaining well-grounded expectations of being received hereafter, with a—*Well done good and faithful servant*. The hopes of such a glorious exit should, indeed, animate us to undertake and go through this work with a becoming cheerfulness and fortitude. The crown of those that turn many unto righteousness is, indeed, well worth the striving for—and I hope it is an ambition not unworthy of a Christian to wish for it. Oh! do not, then, deny the assistance that is expected from you for such an end; but let us all join together in earnest and fervent prayer for these things—*That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified*. These particulars may serve to put both you and myself in mind of our respective duties; and, for our further encouragement in the practice of them, I shall just put you in mind, as was proposed, in the

THIRD Place, *Of some considerations that should engage you to put in practice this exhortation of the Apostle that has now been explained.* In the

FIRST place, Consider how important the work, and of how great consequence the success of the gospel is to your own souls. What we said formerly may convince you of this. The glorifying the perfections and the word of God, by bringing sinners to Christ, is concerned in this matter: The eternal happiness or misery of your own souls do, in some sort, depend on it; for to some we are the savour of *life unto life*, and to others that of *death unto death*. The rejecting of Christ, in a preached gospel, is the greatest affront we can put upon Heaven; and will add a double weight to the chains of darkness, with which unbelieving sinners will be loaded for ever: While, on the other hand, these that receive and embrace the joyful sound shall shine as the brightness of the firmament to all eternity. May we not say, then, *Who is sufficient for these things?* And call upon you to *pray for us*, that such important work may not miscarry in our hands. In the

SECOND place, To engage you to this, consider how many difficulties are to be met with in the discharge of the ministry—difficulties, which, without the assistance of an Almighty power, and the direction of the Spirit of grace, may make all our attempts fruitless; and make this gospel, indeed, the *savour of death unto us*. Consider the difficulties arising from the nature of the work itself—from the different tempers and characters of the persons for whom it is designed; and chiefly, from the opposition we meet with from sin, Satan, and the world. From all these airths discouragements may arise; the prospect of which gives

us a title to beg, and an earnest desire to have your prayers to God on our behalf. As we would, at the same time, hope that every one of you will contribute what is necessary on your part, to make them as light as possible. Consider, in the

THIRD place, That as it depends on God alone to make our preaching successful, so the residue of the Spirit is with him; and we have reason to hope, that your fervent prayers may obtain it for this purpose. *Though we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life,* 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. The more unworthy the instrument is, the more will the grace of Christ be manifested, and the excellency of the power be from him. He is not an hard master, sending any a warfare on their own charges, or calling them to extraordinary work without promising them extraordinary assistance! No: He who has commanded his servants to go into all the world, and *preach the gospel to every creature*, has also given them a peculiar promise of his being with them in that work. Plead this promise in the prayer of faith—such prayers as these give glory to God; and such prayers as these, we have reason to hope, he will answer. And to prompt you further to this, consider, in the

FOURTH and *last* place, That the answer to these prayers will turn to your own benefit and advantage; for the more we are assisted by the Spirit of Jesus, the more will you be edified and comforted; the more we increase in spiritual gifts and graces, the more will we be in a condition to help you forward in the spiritual life. Our success and acceptance with God is
yours;

yours ; our interest is common ; our gain or loss by your *praying for us*, or neglecting to do it, will be mutual. Allow me now to conclude with this general reflection on all that has been said.

IF the end of a gospel ministry, is, *That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified*, let me call on you to examine how far this *end* has been obtained among yourselves ; particularly by the Ministry of your late Reverend and worthy Pastor, whose labours, we have good reason to believe, were accepted of God ; and that he now reaps the reward of them, whether they have turned out to you as the *savour of life unto life*, or that of *death unto death*.

TAKE this advice from one who is really most unworthy to stand in his place ; but who would rejoice to think that his labours had not been in vain, and to build on that foundation which he laid among you. Remember, my Brethren, that contempt of the gospel is likely to be attended with heavy spiritual judgments ; so that the things that belong to your peace may be for ever hid from your eyes. But I hope better things of you ; and that there are amongst us a goodly number, whose intercessions at the throne of grace we may expect, and we may hope shall be effectual for us, *that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified*. Amen.

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THE END.

IN the arrangement of these Sermons, no respect has been had to the order of time in which they were delivered ; the subjects, being disconnected, were inserted as the manuscripts came to hand. From several passages in the preceding Discourse, the reader will observe, that, though here placed last, it was the first sermon the Author preached after his ordination. Should this volume meet with approbation, there are some more of Mr Buchanan's manuscripts which may yet be published.

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